Reciprocal Alchemy

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Reciprocal Alchemy

by Scifibabe

Summary

In the silent echoes of his dreams, Will Graham treads a line blurred between control and chaos, each step drawing him inexorably towards claiming Hannibal as his own. It's a perilous dance on the edge of darkness, where the thrill of possession whispers of a transformation too profound to resist.

OR

Will wakes up hornier than he's ever been after dreaming about tying Hannibal to a tree and killing him. What's to be done about that?

Season 2 AU.

Notes

Hi! This is my first fic in... a decade? and this author thrives on positive reinforcement :)

Enjoy!!

p.s. come find me on tumblr @graciereadshannigram !

Unraveled

Will woke with a wild gasp, hips making abortive twitches into the mattress beneath him. As reality reasserted itself, he felt the peak of his orgasm recede, and he rolled onto his back with a frustrated groan. He was drenched in sweat despite the chill in the room – nothing new there. His heart pounded against his ribcage, echoing in his ears like a frantic drum. The bed sheets felt damp and tangled around his legs, a testament to the intensity of his dream.

As he lay back, trying to catch his breath, the images from his dream began to wash over him again, each moment vivid as a fresh wound. Snow had fallen silently in the woods around Wolf Trap, dusting the ground and the thick, bare branches with a pristine white that muted the world into shades of gray and cold blues. The air had been brittle, each breath a visible puff that briefly clouded the air between him and Hannibal.

Hannibal had stood a few feet away, tied firmly to an aged maple tree with ropes that were tethered to Will's ravenstag. Despite the ropes snugly wrapped around his throat and the gnarled trunk, Hannibal's posture retained its usual elegance, his attire impeccably tailored, contrasting sharply with his predicament. His face had been calm, an otherwise impassive mask.

"Which answer is it you want to hear, Will?" Hannibal's calm, almost soothing voice had broken the silence of the chilling wind.

"What's happening now and about to happen is an answer," Will had replied, stepping closer. His breath quickened not solely from the cold. "I want an admission. I want you to admit what you are."

"Must I denounce myself as a monster while you still refuse to see the one growing inside you?" Hannibal's gaze had roved up and down Will's figure, leaving a trail of heat that burned from the inside out.

To cover his blatant sound of desire, Will let out a low whistle. The ravenstag responded, its movement subtle yet deliberate, tightening the ropes around Hannibal's throat. Hannibal had merely swallowed against the increased pressure, his composure unbreakable. Will's eyes tracked the movement– the slight bob of his Adam's apple against the increasing pressure. This unbreakable composure triggered something primal within Will—something violent, something possessive. His fingers clenched involuntarily into fists, and his jaw tightened as a wave of frustration washed over him, mixed with a deep, almost forbidden thrill.

Back in reality, lying in his bed, Will realized how intensely aroused he was. His hand trailed down his torso, almost of its own accord, and grazed a nipple – already hard in the chilled air of Will's living room – with one of his nails. The spark of pleasure was electric, jolting through him with a clarity that made him gasp softly. Was he really so turned on by the power dynamics of this dream? The thought both disturbed and excited him, sending another wave of heat coursing through his veins.

Lying back against the cool sheets, Will paused, his breath catching in his throat as he contemplated the vivid images that lingered in his mind. It struck him then, with an unnerving clarity, how much his emotions had shifted. There was a time when his thoughts of Hannibal were consumed by a visceral need for justice, for retribution—thoughts darkened with the intent to destroy the man who had so intricately entangled himself in Will's life.

But now, those thoughts had morphed into something else entirely. A desire not just to subdue but to possess, to claim Hannibal as his own. This realization made him uneasy; it was a significant transformation, one that suggested he was more deeply connected to Hannibal than he had ever intended.

Leaving that contemplation for later in favor of returning to more pleasurable thoughts, Will allowed himself to sink back into his dream. He recalled Hannibal's next words, spoken with that calm, infuriating poise. "Why not appeal to my better nature?" Hannibal had still been completely unfazed.

“I wasn't aware you had one,” Will had retorted, his lips snapping back together, the corner of his mouth twitching in a bitter smile.

Hannibal’s lips—those gorgeous, captivating lips—had curved slightly, almost imperceptibly. “No one can be fully aware of another human being unless we love them. By that love, we see potential in our beloved. Through that love, we allow our beloved to see their potential. Expressing that love, our beloved's potential comes true.”

This admission took Will aback, the words striking a chord deep within him. How could such an admission not shake him? They were fraught with implications, with a depth of emotion that Will wasn't prepared to fully confront yet.

Back in Will’s bed, he whimpered at the memory of the admission. Now more purposefully, his hands roamed across his body, exploring his more erogenous zones. Each touch sparked another wave of arousal as he fantasized that it was Hannibal’s lips tracing his skin, going exactly where Will firmly commanded.

Back in the dream, the violent tension of the moment had slowly twisted into something undeniably sexual. The realization of what this was, of what he wanted and what Hannibal evoked in him, was overwhelming. With a start, Will had realized he was achingly hard.

Back in reality, Will acknowledged that he was equally, if not more, hard.

"Fuck it," he muttered to himself, now fully awake and still throbbing with unresolved arousal. He hadn’t been this desperately turned on, this ravenous, in years. Possibly ever. He resolved to not think about it too much, and sparing a moment to spit into his palm, thrust his hand into his boxers and let the dream come back to him in vivid detail. As he did so, his mind painted a lurid picture: Hannibal sprawled across Will’s bed, tightly restrained, with Will kneeling over him, dictating each movement, each plea.

The power of having Hannibal at his complete mercy, even in mere fantasy, was overwhelming. As he stroked himself, he envisioned Hannibal’s perfect, plush lips wrapped around his cock, helpless and desperate, unable to do anything but take as Will commanded.

The imagined wet heat, the drag of tongue–Will's breath hitched, his heart pounded as his grip tightened. The thought of breaking Hannibal's composure, of seeing those stoic eyes wet with tears of unspoken pleas, sparked a dark thrill through his veins.

A whine escaped Will, one he might have minded if not overwhelmed by pleasure; his hand moved faster, driven by an urgent need for release. He wanted, he needed Hannibal to be —"Mine," he gasped to the empty room, the edge of pleasure sharp and near. "You're mine," he exhaled. Every stroke was a claim, each whimper a surrender to the fantasies that haunted him.

As he climaxed, his own control shattered, accompanied by a long cry, pleasure overwhelming him in waves. Limbs heavy with satisfaction and heart still thundering in his ears, mind pleasurably blank, Will laid in bed, his release cooling on his belly. His dogs had managed to remain sleeping, and Will noted Buster's gentle snores and the birdsong coming in through the window from outside.

His mind coming back to him, Will felt a clarity wash over him that was almost startling in its intensity. The tension between himself and Hannibal had always been palpable, charged with the electric thrill of the hunt and the danger it posed. But now, Will understood it was evolving into something deeper, more primal—a visceral need to claim what felt increasingly like his own.

Will leaned back against the cool sheets, a faint smirk playing across his lips despite the earnestness of his thoughts. It was ironic, really. He had begun this dance with intentions shaded by righteous fury and a hunger for retributive justice—a desire for murderous vengeance.

Mouth twisting with distaste, his thoughts jumped to Matthew Brown, a vivid image of Hannibal's scars seared into his memory. The sight of those scars, inflicted by someone else's hand, had stirred a strange cocktail of emotions within him—vindictive satisfaction, anger, jealousy, and then an unsettling desire to protect. The idea that someone else hurt Hannibal in a way that was his right alone- even if he led them to it- was intolerable, even unthinkable. It had pushed his feelings to morph from mere responsive violence to a more complex, possessive claim.

Will was becoming a formidable predator in his own right, one with teeth and claws– one perfectly suited for Hannibal. With that realization came a wave of bone deep possessiveness. Hannibal was *his* to play with, *his* to control.

He figured he should be more concerned with this particular line of thinking, but could only muster a light buzzing of anticipation. *I need to deal with my feelings, indeed* , he thought with a snort, calling to mind the words he had so recently thrown at Hannibal.

Just perhaps in a slightly different way than originally planned. Will had never been fully comfortable with Jack's plan to use him to lure Hannibal out, but, had he been asked, he would have been hard-pressed to explain exactly why. He had certainly wanted justice. Justice for himself. He had been Hannibal's plaything for so long. Will was incapable of letting Hannibal off the hook for that. But his dream had just presented a different avenue for justice. One that cut Jack out, left Hannibal for Will alone.

The shrill of his phone cut through the post-orgasmic haze. Jack. *Speak of the devil*. Duty called, always at the most inconvenient times. With a reluctant groan, Will wiped his hand on the edge of the sheet and grabbed the phone. "Graham," he answered, voice rough with recent exertion.

"We need you at a crime scene," Jack's voice came through, brisk and oblivious to the turmoil he'd just interrupted. "It's hard to explain; you'll have to see it yourself. It's a mess, Will."

A rush of irritation washed over Will. Why did he always get called in for the messy ones? Since his release, the frequency of these calls from Jack had become grating, barely tolerable. More than once, Will had considered telling Jack to fuck off with them. *Hannibal would likely find that amusing* , a dark smirk playing on his lips at the thought. He barely held in the impulse to ask Jack if Hannibal would be there. He didn't want to start a conversation he wasn't prepared to finish, especially not with Jack, who didn't need to start asking questions that Will didn't exactly have answers for—at least, not ones that were appropriate to give to his boss.

"I'll be there soon," Will replied, pushing himself up to sit. He swung his legs off the bed, the physical movement anchoring him back to reality. He needed a shower, sticky with his release and sweat. The cool water would be welcome, a necessary separation between the night's indulgences and the day's demands.

As Will closed the car door behind him, the silence of his vehicle enveloped him—a stark contrast to the vivid chaos of his recent dream. He started the engine, the familiar hum and the dashboard lights grounding him back to reality, yet his mind was already miles ahead, racing alongside thoughts of Hannibal.

As Will's car hummed down the empty morning streets, he found the steady rhythm of the engine and the cool grip of the steering wheel oddly soothing, yet insufficient to distract from the images that replayed in his mind. While some small part of his mind was focused on following the GPS instructions and keeping his car firmly on the road–rather than in a ditch, the rest drifted back to the vivid dream and its lingering aftermath. It was absurd, really, how his subconscious seemed determined to cast Hannibal in roles that were both disturbing and strangely satisfying.

In the dream, Hannibal's submission had been almost comical in its contradiction to reality. Will couldn't help a smirk as he replayed the image of Hannibal bound and slightly disheveled—such a far cry from the man's usual unflappable demeanor. The idea of Hannibal, the epitome of control, being at his mercy was an image potent enough to stir a deep, visceral satisfaction in Will. It was like turning the tables, subjecting Hannibal to the same kind of indignity and manipulation he had doled out so generously.

His smirk faded as he navigated through the traffic, his hands tightening on the wheel—each turn he made, controlled and deliberate, mirrored the tightening grip he wished to have on Hannibal. Will was being forced to confront the implications of these nocturnal fantasies. Did it matter if Hannibal was capable of love, or if he loved Will? The very idea was laughable—like expecting a shark to swim alongside you when it really just wanted a taste of your leg. And yet, the notion tugged at him with an annoying persistence.

Will's thoughts spiraled further. Hannibal had played him like a well-tuned violin, and here he was, contemplating the symphony they could create together with the roles reversed. The power dynamic that thrilled him in his dreams was a source of a dark, greedy pleasure. It was one thing to be manipulated; it was entirely another to hold the strings. And hold them he would, if given half the chance.

Maybe, just maybe, he could grow to love the man Hannibal was beneath the layers of composure and calculated cruelty. But then again, Will mused with a snort, he might just as likely teach a fish to sing opera. The possibility of loving Hannibal didn't just depend on Hannibal himself—it was tied up in Will's own tangled web of emotions, his ability to forgive, and perhaps more dangerously, his burgeoning sense of possessiveness. Hannibal was, in many twisted ways, his to claim.

Love? That might be stretching it. But possess? Control? Those were impulses Will felt right down to his marrow. They were powerful, heady things, and a part of him envied the freedom of those thoughts, unreserved and unbound by instinct.

The rhythm of the drive helped to settle his racing mind. By the time he arrived at the crime scene, Will had resolved to play this game with Hannibal on his terms. Love might be a bridge too far, but in the twisted game they played, possession was nine-tenths of the law. And Will was nothing if not law-abiding in his own right.

Stepping out of his car, the crisp air hitting his face, the shadows seemed less oppressive, his thoughts less chaotic. He might not be ready to define what he felt as love, but he was certainly ready to explore the intoxicating allure of power—of having Hannibal, in all his dangerous allure, potentially at his mercy. What a novel concept, indeed.

A shiver ran through him—not from the morning chill that seeped through his coat, but from a deep, almost primal realization. He was changing, evolving into something formidable, something even more dangerous than he had ever imagined.

"Wind him up, and watch him go," Will murmured to himself, a wry smile touching his lips as he moved to join the team at the crime scene.

Evolving Instincts

Chapter Notes

I have a beta!! Let's all say thank you to Debbie_e for helping me get this out (way) ahead of schedule <3

As always, kudos and comments fuel my writing, so if you want more... you know what to do!!

p.s. if you're reading this and you have an idea for a scene or interaction you wanna see, let me know! I make no promises but if it piques my interest, I'll give it a shot!

come find me on tumblr @graciereadshannigram

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The air was cold as Will stepped out of his car, the weak winter sun doing nothing to bring warmth to the day. He found himself, as he had on more than one occasion, grateful for his new woolen coat. Originally purchased as part of Will and Jack's plan to make Will more alluring as bait, with no thought given for practicality, it was surprisingly functional and kept the chill at bay. And it happened to be the coat Will had been wearing in his dream earlier…

No, focus, Will thought firmly, quickly tamping down that train of thought. If Hannibal was here, he'd be able to scent Will's arousal like a bloodhound. A not entirely unwelcome thought, but this was neither the time nor place.

As Will approached the truck stop, observing the FBI agents and techs flitting around bagging and tagging evidence, he kept a keen eye out for Hannibal's silhouette, or his silvery blonde hair glinting in the light, but had no luck. The flush of disappointment was palpable enough that Will heaved a sigh before pushing it to the back of his mind.

His gaze scanned the crowd again, lingering on a man speaking intently with Jack. The slope of the stranger's shoulders looked strangely familiar, yet the absurd trapper hat sitting atop his head threw Will off. It lacked any semblance of the elegance Hannibal always wore like a second skin. *Hannibal would never wear such an undignified piece of apparel,* Will thought, trying to imagine it and failing. The man's presence, however, teased at the edge of Will's perception, a nagging whisper that something was off.

He found his mind drifting back to the dream from earlier that morning, the way Hannibal's tailored clothing had seemed almost painted on him, accentuating every line and curve with meticulous grace. Even in Will's subconscious, Hannibal was the epitome of sartorial perfection, a stark contrast to the figure now standing before Jack.

Get it together, Graham, Will chided himself silently, feeling his arousal threatening to swell once again. *Even if Hannibal isn't here to smell it on you, showing up to a crime scene with a stiffy won't help quash the rumors that you're a crazy criminal yourself.*

Disturbed by his own thoughts, Will shook his head slightly, trying to dispel vivid images of Hannibal bound and vulnerable yet so controlled and poised. It was disorienting, how deeply those fabricated moments had infiltrated his psyche, blurring the lines between his desires and his duty.

It was this dissonance that convinced Will he was looking at a stranger, not the man who haunted both his waking thoughts and his dreams. He forced himself to focus on the task at hand, mentally preparing for the professional facade he needed to maintain.

At that moment, Jack turned around, spotting Will in seconds and barked, “Will! What took you so long? Get over here!” Knowing the question was rhetorical, and holding back an eye roll – *get me a goddamn teleporter if you want me here faster* – Will sped up his pace. As he approached, he realized the man next to Jack was *Hannibal* .

Will took his place between the other two men and–“Nice hat, Dr. Lecter.” Will managed to suppress the unexpected wave of fondness the hat elicited, but found it impossible to keep the snarky tone from bleeding into his comment. Hannibal looked as if he was about to reply when they were distracted by Zeller and Price.

“No guts, no glory,” came Zeller’s voice as he, presumably, inspected the body.

“There’re guts,” Price responded, and with a pointed finger indicated, “They’re over there.”

Distracted by Hannibal as he was, Will turned to properly look at the scene and was immediately struck by the savagery present. It painted a vivid, animalistic picture. A kind of raw ferocity that had part of Will perking up and sniffing the air. But he allowed himself only a fleeting appreciation of the primal allure, quickly refocusing. “It snowed all night. There are no tracks. You’re sure it was an animal?”

He found his thoughts drifting caught by a certain glint in Hannibal’s eyes. Zeller and Price continued prattling on, something about wolves and bears, but Will was momentarily sidetracked by that glint–a hint of amusement, as if Hannibal found private humor in Will’s immediate insight. It hinted at an inside joke that Will wasn’t privy to–did Hannibal know something of the true nature of the attacker? This amused acknowledgment from Hannibal sparked a challenging curiosity in Will, a desire to crack open and unravel the enigma of the man before him.

Will came back to the present when Jack stated, “Whatever it was, it wasn’t afraid of humans. Not anymore.”

“Wolves and bears don’t eat where they kill. They would’ve dragged him off,” Will mused to nobody in particular.

A mild thrill ran through him when Hannibal responded, “Unless it went mad. A rabid animal attacks its victims at random and doesn’t eat any part of them.”

Will cocked an eyebrow as Zeller and Price continued to chatter, and glanced at Hannibal. *Of course, that would make you, Doctor, the paragon of civilized beasts. Because you eat your kills.* Will knew Hannibal caught the amusement in his eyes as the doctor's pupils flared. Amusement that quickly turned into something more heated as Hannibal held his eye contact, something hungry flashing across his face.

Looking away with a huff, Will turned his gaze and asked, "Since when does the FBI get involved in animal attacks, Jack?"

"When somebody's holding the leash of whatever's doing the attacking." Will considered that, turning the idea over in his mind. *Somebody with a monster on a leash?* His tone solemn, Jack continued, "He's going to kill again and he's going to get better at it."

The idea made sense. Wondering if Hannibal was going to chime in again, Will added, "He's urbanizing his animal – moving closer to the city, adapting it to bigger prey."

Hannibal did not disappoint. "He's not denying its natural instincts, he's evolving them."

If anybody knew about urbanizing a monster and evolving its instincts, it would be you, Doctor Lecter . Again, Will was certain that Hannibal caught onto his thoughts from the heated look he shot Will. Jack spared both of them a glance, considering their exchange.

"It's a blood sport."

After the forensic team moved on, Hannibal lingered by the crime scene, his gaze fixed on the chaos left in the wake of brutality. Instead of leaving for his car, as Jack had cleared him to, Will approached, the crunch of snow under his boots breaking the silence.

"Doctor Lecter," Will began, his voice steady but charged, "you mentioned evolution, not denial of natural instincts. It's an interesting perspective, considering the nature of this... brutality."

Hannibal turned slowly to face him, a faint smile playing at the corners of his mouth. "Evolution, Will, is merely the survival of the fittest applied to the future. As an entity adapts, it learns not merely to survive, but to thrive by transforming its instincts into something... more refined."

Will's eyes narrowed slightly, his mind turning over Hannibal's words. "And if those instincts are inherently violent? What does refinement look like then?"

"It looks like control, Will," Hannibal answered smoothly. "Control over that which is savage within us. To refine violence is not to dilute it, but to direct it—purposefully, *artfully* , even."

The implication hung heavily between them, a shared understanding veiled beneath the academic tone. Will felt a thrill at the thought, his own desires mirroring the concept. "Like a monster on a leash?"

"Precisely," Hannibal nodded. "But who, I wonder, holds the leash?"

Will stepped closer, his voice lowering. “Maybe it’s not about holding the leash at all, but about knowing when to let it go and when to pull it tight. Control isn’t just about restraint—it’s about making a choice.”

Hannibal’s eyes lit up with a curious blend of admiration and challenge. “And have you made a choice, Will?”

The question sent a jolt through Will, his morning's revelations still fresh and potent. “I’m beginning to see the appeal of... evolution, of not denying what’s natural but steering it where I need it to go,” Will stated firmly.

“A dangerous but exhilarating path,” Hannibal observed, stepping in closer to match Will’s proximity. “It requires a partner of equal strength and understanding.”

Will took a deep breath of the invigorating cold air, looking Hannibal directly in the eyes. “I think a further discussion would be beneficial. May I come to dinner tonight? I find our conversations... most invigorating.” He let the bait dangle, knowing Hannibal would bite.

Hannibal’s smile widened, clearly pleased by Will’s assertiveness. “Of course, Will. I would be most honored to host you. It’s rare to find someone who appreciates the finer nuances of such discussions.”

“In that case, I’ll see you at 8pm.”

“Until then, Will.”

The two men shared a look, a silent acknowledgment of the dangerous game they were entangled in. As they parted ways, Will felt a sense of anticipation he couldn’t entirely attribute to the criminal investigation. Hannibal, it seemed, was not just a monster to be leashed but a hunter to perhaps, in time, run alongside.

Back in his house in Wolf Trap, Will rummaged through the cabinets for something to eat, his movements absent-minded as his thoughts continued to circle Hannibal. The house was quiet, the kind of silence that felt almost thick, laden with the echoes of his earlier contemplations. He decided on pasta and began preparations, his actions mechanical, his mind elsewhere.

What would it really look like, having Hannibal’s submission? Will imagined it vividly—Hannibal, the epitome of control and poise, yielding to him. On his knees, looking up at Will with glassy deep maroon eyes; lips bitten red and composure ever so close to breaking. The image sent an intense shiver through him. Since when has his sexual appetite been so… voracious?

It was peculiar, having experienced an earth-shattering orgasm earlier in the day, and here he was, mentally gearing up for another round. Historically, Will's interest in sex had been more of an academic curiosity than a burning need. The excess of mirror neurons swirling in his brain made intimacy a double-edged sword; he was acutely aware of every minute shift in his partner's satisfaction, or the lack thereof. He appreciated the physical release, sure, but the emotional entanglement was usually too complex, too messy for his taste.

Will snorted to himself; if anyone were to bring out such fervor in him, of course, it would be Hannibal. There was an irony there, considering the other, darker appetites Hannibal had awoken in him.

The sizzle of the boiling water snapped him back to the moment, reminding him to put the fettuccine into the pot, which he did with minimal spillage; the mundane sound of the water bubbling was oddly grounding. Will stirred the pasta, watching the steam rise with a semblance of normalcy that felt almost alien now. He was getting worked up again, the heat not just from the stove but kindling within him, stoked by thoughts of having Hannibal under his control. It was unsettling how much he wanted Hannibal's submission, how deeply he desired to see the composed mask fall away to reveal something raw and vulnerable.

With a massive effort, Will forced his thoughts to other things. He focused on the texture of the food, the mechanical movements of stirring and seasoning, anything to distract from the dangerous path his mind wandered. He needed to keep a grip on himself, to not let these consuming thoughts overtake him. It was one thing to fantasize, another to let those fantasies dictate his reality.

As he plated the pasta and sat down to eat, the quiet of the house wrapped around him again, a reminder of his solitude. He chewed thoughtfully, the food a bland contrast to the richness of his inner turmoil. It was ridiculous, really, how much mental real estate Hannibal occupied, how much of his inner life was devoted to unraveling the enigma that was Dr. Hannibal Lecter.

Will laughed softly to himself, a short, humorless sound. "Get a grip, Graham," he muttered under his breath, shaking his head. The absurdity of it all wasn't lost on him; here he was, getting worked up over fantasies of control, while in reality, he was the one being consumed by his thoughts, by his desires.

The force of effort had him turning to other activities to keep his mind busy. There was a boat motor he'd been meaning to work on; that should keep him busy. As he set up his tools, the tangible, oily components of the motor grounded him, pulling him further from the ethereal and back to the tangible—a welcome diversion from the elaborate snare in his mind.

Will lost track of time as he tinkered with the boat motor, his hands working confidently through the familiar motions. It was only the fading light that reminded him of the evening's plans. He glanced at the clock and realized that he'd better start getting ready if he didn't want to be late. Hannibal never asked for anything but his company, which Will could admit made things unnervingly simple—almost too simple.

He sighed and made his way to the bathroom. Despite having already showered, the day's activities with the dogs and around the house had left him in need of a refresh. Plus, he thought with a smirk, it wouldn't hurt to look good for Hannibal. He justified it to himself as part of the game—they both knew the rules, after all. It was about knowing what Hannibal liked, playing into those preferences to keep the upper hand. But Will had to admit there was a certain thrill in being the focus of Hannibal's discerning eye. It didn't bother him as much as it probably should have.

With his thoughts swirling relentlessly around Hannibal, Will found the arousal he had temporarily headed off earlier beginning to rise again. This time, with almost no mental resistance, he gave into it as he stepped into the shower. The sensual atmosphere of the warm, enclosed space enveloped him immediately. He adjusted the showerhead, letting the stream of hot water cascade down his body, the heat soaking into his muscles and easing the tension that had built throughout the day.

The scents of his shower products filled the air—rich, earthy tones that he had chosen carefully, swirling around in the steamy heat. Originally purchased after being released from the BSHCI with the intent of making himself a more attractive lure for Hannibal, Will found himself beginning to genuinely enjoy them for himself. At the very least, his curls appreciated the more expensive shampoo and conditioner.

Will couldn't help but think about Hannibal as he lathered up his washcloth and started gently scrubbing up and down his arms and legs, making a point to avoid his groin. The anticipation of successfully luring Hannibal to him tingled across his skin, mingling with the tactile sensation of the washcloth.

As he moved to clean his chest, the gentle rasp of the cloth sent shivers down his spine. Will found his head tilting back, allowing water from the spray to run down his face. As the washcloth swept over his pecs and brushed against his nipples, sharp sparks of arousal zipped through him, his cock swelling further with each touch. Groaning, he turned back into the shower spray, warm water caressing his torso, adding further gentle stimulation as it washed away the woodsy scented soap.

The heat of the water conjured a vivid image: Hannibal, forearms on the wall, back pressed tightly against Will's chest. Reacting almost instinctively, Will slid his hand down to find his cock, slippery with a mix of pre-come, soap, and water. Will exhaled with relief at the touch, and began a slow rhythm with his hand.

In his mind, Will was sucking lightly on Hannibal's neck, the sensation getting deeper, more intense as Hannibal became more vocal. A soft groan escaped Will's lips in the shower, mimicking the faint sound of his own name exhaled from Hannibal's lips.

A jolt of need had Will's hand speeding up, his desire washing over him. In the fantasy, his hands teased down Hannibal's chest, caressing the slight swell of his stomach, then pausing. Hannibal, growing more desperate, whined and pushed back, grinding his ass into Will's groin.

Back in the shower, Will gasped as his grip tightened on his cock, increasing the pace of his strokes. His hips thrust into his hand, imagining he was thrusting forward into Hannibal's smooth, slippery skin. As the pleasure built, Will let out a series of moans, each growing more ragged than the last. In a surge of intensity, his empty hand slammed against the shower wall, a desperate attempt to keep himself upright.

As the fantasy deepened, Hannibal's motions became more frantic, mirroring Will's passion as his climax began to build, swelling throughout his core. Will heard Hannibal's voice, caught on a moan, chest hitching with uneven breaths. "W-Will, *please* –" was cut off in favor of an extended whine as Will's hand encircled Hannibal's length.

He found himself wishing for something firm, something solid between his teeth–primal instincts roaring at him to *bite* –to sink his teeth into muscle, to tear and mark, to consume and claim. The thought of laying such a claim to Hannibal was enough to send Will's climax barreling through him, hips jerking into his hand with abandon.

As the water continued to run, washing away the remnants of soap and heat, Will gasped for a few moments before he moved to turn off the shower. He stood for a moment, letting the last drops of water drip from his hair, feeling a mixture of satisfaction and readiness. Stepping out, he grabbed a towel and began to dry off, the fabric rough against his skin—a stark contrast to the soothing warmth he had just left behind.

Wiping the steam off the mirror, he met his own gaze and muttered, "You're getting soft, Graham." But the soft smile that lingered belied his true feelings. Ready or not, Hannibal was once again the center of his evening, and that wasn't just strategy—it was something alarmingly close to anticipation.

Chapter End Notes

next up: dinner!!!

(also. if this made you horny, please please please let me know. go send me anonymous asks on tumblr if you have to. pLEASE. i am but a girl, terrified of writing bad smut, seeking external validation thank u)

Edges of Control and Chaos

Chapter Summary

Hannibal and Will have dinner.

Chapter Notes

I really wanted to commit to a posting schedule, but this was done so I'm posting early!! Moving forward, my goal will be at least 1 chapter per week, but if chapters are done early, I'll post them.

As always, big shoutout to my absolutely amazing beta Debbie_e for all the work put into this fic!

Enjoy :)

p.s. find me on tumblr @graciereadshannigram!

Will pulled up to Hannibal's home a few minutes before eight. He put his car in park and paused to take a deep breath. His chest was a mixture of roiling emotions, seemingly ready to bubble up into his throat. In the past, his evenings with Hannibal had followed the man's own agenda, Will being generally content to follow his lead. Will knew tonight was going to be different. He knew exactly what he wanted from Hannibal and was ready to aggressively pursue it.

And God help him, he wanted it desperately. His mind wouldn't stop circling back to it, consumed by the tantalizing thought of having Hannibal yield beneath him, of having the Chesapeake Ripper undone and at his utter mercy.

With a final exhale to steady himself, Will stepped out of his Volvo, giving himself a final once-over. Will had chosen a cream sweater; the one that was worn enough to be heavenly against his skin, but new enough to be one of his finest items. Hannibal wasn't the type to deny himself sensory pleasure, and Will hoped the soft texture would invite an incidental touch from the man, an opportunity for subtle and intimate contact. Further inviting Hannibal's attention were the dark fitted jeans he had pulled on, knowing they made his ass look good. *And Hannibal is definitely an ass man*, Will smirked to himself.

He looked good and he knew it.

Adjusting his grip on the new bottle of whiskey, he walked up to knock on the door. Will was looking forward to offering the beverage–a departure from their usual wine-laden dinners. The choice was deliberate, a small assertion of control and a test in its own right. He was curious to see how Hannibal would react, to tweak the finely tuned strings of their interactions and observe the vibrations.

Hannibal opened the door, his gaze flicking briefly to the bottle in Will's hand before dropping to sweep up and down Will's form. His eyes lingered on the sweater draped across Will's chest, the jeans hugging his legs. Desire was clearly etched in his features. *Got him.* "Good evening, Will. I see you've brought something to warm us against the chill of the night," Hannibal remarked, his accented voice smooth, inviting Will into the warmly lit foyer.

"It seemed fitting." Will replied, stepping inside, ensuring he brushed shoulders with Hannibal as he entered. His movement was deliberate, designed to draw Hannibal's attention once more to the soft fabric of his sweater and the cut of his jeans. "A change of pace, a different kind of warmth." He watched closely for Hannibal's reaction, catching the slight nod of approval and the almost imperceptible uptick in Hannibal's brow—hopefully an acknowledgment of Will's carefully curated appearance.

"Indeed, the robustness of whiskey has a charm all its own," Hannibal mused, leading Will not into the dining room, but towards the kitchen where aromas of the evening's meal filled the air. The kitchen was a symphony of sensory impressions: the sizzle of something on the stove, the rich smells of spices and herbs, and the warm, inviting ambiance created by the soft lighting. Will didn't feel the need to ask Hannibal what they would be eating; he would tell Will with his usual dramatic flair as he served them.

As Hannibal poured the whiskey into heavy crystal glasses, the amber liquid glinting under the kitchen lights, he raised his glass in a toast. "To evolution and the mastery of our instincts," he said, echoing their earlier conversation by the crime scene.

Will clinked his glass against Hannibal's. The sound was crisp, clear, a harbinger of the evening's unfolding dynamics. "To knowing when to hold tight and when to let go," he added, his voice carrying a subtle challenge as he made deliberate physical contact, brushing his hand against Hannibal's under the pretense of a steadier grasp.

With the touch, Hannibal's pupils dilated, a fleeting expression of curiosity mixed with a hint of suspicion crossing his face. This brief, nearly imperceptible reaction was not lost on Will. He knew that his typically unpredictable nature was a constant source of fascination for Hannibal, but this—this deliberate initiation of touch where he usually recoiled—was new. Will felt a surge of power pulse through him, a dark thrill at the control he wielded. He was no longer simply responding to the situation; he was orchestrating it, guiding Hannibal's reactions with subtle provocations. It was a heady realization that he could stir such visible responses in someone as composed as Dr. Lecter, and he relished the new dynamics of power at play.

Taking a sip, the warmth of the whiskey contrasted sharply with the cool, calculated gaze he held. Hannibal broke the silence first, admiration tinting his voice. "You mentioned earlier, Will, about not denying what's natural but steering it where needed. It's a compelling approach to accepting one's darker instincts."

“Yes, it’s about transformation rather than suppression,” Will leaned in, his proximity closer than usual, encroaching into the space Hannibal typically commanded. “Refining something inherently violent– not diluting, but accepting and directing it purposefully.”

Hannibal’s eyes narrowed thoughtfully as he regarded Will. “There is no beast more savage than man when possessed with power rooted in instinct– reveling in that savagery as if it were embodying the purest form of nature. It makes one wonder about the nature of our own impulses, the raw instincts we all harbor.”

Will considered this, the corners of his mouth twitching slightly as if amused by the challenge. "There's something to be said for nature in its purest, most untamed form. Instinct, buried bone-deep.”

“Tell me, Will,” Will’s cheeks heated with the way Hannibal’s voice wrapped around the syllable of his name. “Have you found yourself captivated by raw power? When you so discourteously sent a man to kill me, were you imagining killing me yourself? Living vicariously through him as if it was *your* hands tightening the noose around my neck?”

The mention of a noose sent a shiver down Will’s spine, an echo of the vivid imagery from his recent dream that sparked a subtle wave of arousal. Hannibal's eyelids fluttered briefly—a rare lapse in his normally unbreakable facade. Observing this minute crack in Hannibal's armor, a slow, gratifying smile spread across Will's lips, relishing the tangible impact of his presence on Hannibal.

“Yes… and no,” Will mused, bringing himself back to the conversation. “I certainly felt powerful, knowing what following my instincts could do.” Will watched as his words landed, enjoyed the flicker of hunger in Hannibal’s eyes. “But I’m more interested in exploring how my instincts are telling me to seek a different kind of justice. Atonement. For the chaos you’ve wrought, not just around us, but within me.”

Hannibal's expression did not falter; if anything, it deepened in intrigue. "You speak of justice and atonement, Will, yet we both know those concepts are merely veneers for deeper instincts.” Hannibal moved to sip his whiskey and the soft clink of ice cubes punctuated his words, a reminder of what beast lurked behind his eyes. “What are your instincts telling you now, about me?”

“The one who holds the leash decides the direction, controls the pace,” Will responded, his voice low and laced with an undercurrent of defiance. “You tried to leash me with your manipulations, drawing me into your world under the guise of companionship.” Will’s heart twinged with lingering bitterness. “But what happens when the beast sees the snare and decides to ensnare the trapper instead?”

Hannibal leaned forward, a flicker of amusement–or was it a challenge?–in his eyes. “A compelling reversal, one I could see having great appeal to you. But leadership of such a dance cannot be seized by force; it requires a mutual recognition of power and potential.”

Will’s lips twitched into a wry smile at the irony of Hannibal’s words. “Amusing, considering your mastery of force veiled as guidance. Yet here we are, discussing terms of an equality you never offered.”

Hannibal paused, his head tilting to the side. “An astute observation. I can admit our dance began with me leading, perhaps too forcefully, a conductor in front of an unwilling orchestra.” Will snorted softly, the sound more a puff of air than anything—a bitter chuckle at what was perhaps the closest thing to an apology he’d ever heard from Hannibal. “But true music arises not from complete domination, but from harmony–a mutual empowerment we have yet to explore.”

“And if the monster is not interested in mutual empowerment?” The words slipped from Will’s lips before he could stop them, the quickly-swallowed whiskey making its presence known. “Orchestras often have solo pieces.”

“I must say, the ideal would be a partnership where each acknowledges the other’s savagery, yet chooses to dance on the edge of control and chaos together. As equals.”

Will leaned back against the dining table, swirling the whiskey in his glass thoughtfully. The golden liquid caught the light, casting amber reflections across the placemat. "I'm not sure anything *mutual* is enough," he admitted, his voice carrying a hard edge. "Not anymore. There’s a part of me that wonders what it would be like to not just share power, but to take it. To own it."

Hannibal’s gaze intensified, his eyes narrowing slightly as he considered Will's words, tongue darting out to lick his upper lip. "To take power implies a certain... responsibility, Will. One must be prepared for the consequences of such an action. Are you prepared?"

Will’s answering smile was thin, predatory. “I am more than prepared. I have seen the leash you tried to put on me, recognized it for what it was. And now, I’m ready to embrace the shared nature that binds us. Isn’t that what you’ve always wanted? To see if I could accept my own monstrous nature as you have yours?”

“Indeed.” There was a calculating gleam in Hannibal’s eyes, his expression otherwise schooled. “But perhaps this is a conversation better suited to be explored after dinner. Come, let us eat.”

The first course was served, and it was, as always, exquisite. "Liver pâté with fig and balsamic reduction," he declared, his voice imbuing the dish with an air of ceremony. Each serving rested elegantly atop a slice of toasted brioche, the pâté smooth and glistening under a careful drizzle of dark, syrupy balsamic that pooled around the edges.

Will lifted his fork, the silverware glinting faintly in the candlelight, and sliced through the delicate brioche, gathering a perfect blend of the pâté and fig reduction. As the flavors melded on his tongue—rich, tangy, with a hint of sweetness—he couldn’t help but appreciate the craftsmanship. Across the table, Hannibal observed him with an intensity that bordered on rudeness, the lines around his eyes softening as Will savored the bite.

Will met Hannibal's gaze and nodded appreciatively. "As always, it's delicious," he said, his words sincere and filled with the warmth of culinary satisfaction. Hannibal acknowledged the compliment with a slight tilt of his head, his own fork poised elegantly before he too sampled the dish, his movements measured and graceful.

A comfortable silence enveloped them, the earlier tension dissolving into the soft clinks of cutlery and the subtle sounds of their enjoyment. They ate quietly, allowing the exquisite flavors to fill the space between them, a temporary truce held in the shared pleasure of the meal.

The lull in conversation made Will feel bold. “Lately, I have found myself consumed by the idea of forgiveness. Who gets it, why they get it, when they get it. I’ve come to the conclusion that it’s not an entirely conscious process.”

As Hannibal paused, a slight furrow creased his brow, his eyes narrowing as if sculpting thoughts into form. The gentle clink of cutlery touching china filled the brief silence, a subtle reminder of the refined setting that enveloped them. Then, with a tilt of his head that suggested both curiosity and calculated redirection, Hannibal leaned in, the candlelight casting shadows that danced across his features. "Do you know what an imago is, Will?"

Will hesitated, his fork suspended midway to his mouth, as Hannibal's question lingered in the charged air. He offered a measured response, "It's a flying insect," he said cautiously before taking the bite.

Hannibal leaned forward, his gaze intense and probing as he unfolded the concept further. "It's the last stage of a transformation," he said, his eyes locking onto Will’s with the precision of a hunter zeroing in on an intriguing quarry. "When you become who you will be."

With a slight tilt of his head, a mocking smirk curling at his lips, Hannibal added, "It's also a term from the dead religion of psychoanalysis. An imago is an image of a loved one, buried in the unconscious, carried with us all our lives."

"An ideal," Will echoed softly, his fork finally clinking down onto the china plate, the sound crisply punctuating the silence.

"The concept of an ideal…" Hannibal mirrored, leaning even closer, the table their only barrier. His stare was unyielding, piercing through the distance as if it could physically touch.

Feeling the intensity of Hannibal’s scrutiny like a tangible force, Will maintained a low, steady voice. "I have a concept of you, just as you have a concept of me," he declared, challenging Hannibal to reveal more.

“And what is that concept, that imago, you hold of me?” Hannibal’s inquiry was smooth, coated with velvety curiosity, pressing for a depth yet unexplored.

“I’d be more interested in hearing your answer to that, Doctor,” Will countered, his reply both a deflection and an invitation.

Interrupting the moment, Hannibal stood. “Give me one moment, Will. I believe it’s time for the next course.” He returned shortly, bearing plates with an artful arrangement. “Braised heart with root vegetables in a red wine reduction,” he announced, setting down the dish with an almost ceremonial care.

As Will observed the dish, his pulse quickened. The heart, rich and dark against the vibrant vegetables, sparked a morbid curiosity. *Who was sacrificed for our dinner this evening?* he wondered, the thought adding an edge of macabre fascination to the meal.

“More whiskey?” Hannibal offered, moving to take the bottle Will brought to the table.

“Yes, please,” Will murmured, his eyes never leaving Hannibal as he watched the whiskey pour, the steady stream catching the light before disappearing into the depth of his glass. “Thank you.” He waited, his gaze locked with Hannibal’s until the man resumed his seat, the subtle shift of fabric and the slight clink of cutlery marking the moment.

Will then turned his attention to the dish before him. The knife slid through the heart effortlessly, revealing its succulent interior. As he took a bite, the flavors burst alive in his mouth—rich, complex, the sauce enveloping his taste buds and lingering as it slid down his throat.

Across the table, Hannibal too sampled the heart, his swallow marked by the deliberate bob of his Adam’s apple. The sight sparked a dark thought in Will, imagining his fingers clasped tightly around that throat, pressing, tightening. He shook the image away as quickly as it had formed, aware of Hannibal’s perceptive gaze likely catching the flicker of intent in his eyes. “I believe I asked you a question, Doctor,” Will steered the conversation back, his voice steady but the air around them charged, thick with the tension that had been simmering since the kitchen.

Hannibal's response came with a measured pause, his eyes gleaming with the thrill of the intellectual chase. “Very well, Will,” he said, his tone dipping into a contemplative cadence. "The imago I hold of you is that of a creature on the brink of profound change, poised on the precipice of its metamorphosis, about to emerge in full splendor."

As Hannibal spoke, the room seemed to pulse with a palpable heat, the atmosphere dense with the weight of his words. Will felt a heat unfurl along his spine, the description striking a primal chord within him. The slight tremble of his hand was mirrored by the gentle quiver of the whiskey in his glass as he set it down, the resonance of Hannibal’s vision stirring something deep and undeniable within him.

He leaned in slightly, his expression intense. "A wild, unpredictable entity, yet one that harbors purpose and an appreciation for elegance.” Hannibal paused, eyes flicking up, and continued, “And yes, it is bloodthirsty," His voice was almost a whisper, charged with an unspoken understanding between them.

Will's breath hitched, the mention of bloodthirstiness resonating deeply in his core. He could feel his pulse quicken, a response he knew wasn't lost on Hannibal, who watched him with predatory precision. The proximity of their bodies, the mingling of their breaths, seemed to amplify everything, each sensation heightened, each emotion magnified.

Will noticed a similar arousal mirrored in Hannibal’s eyes, a darkening that spoke of shared desire and dangerous possibilities. His empathy, usually a source of torment, now acted as a conduit, intensifying the electric charge that crackled in the air between them.

Hannibal's gaze fixed more intently on Will, his tone turning philosophical. "This creature, the imago you represent, embodies the capricious nature of a god, following its instincts, its whims. It has the capacity to forgive, to bestow grace or withhold it, much like the gods of old."

Pausing, he allowed the weight of his words to settle in the air between them, the atmosphere thick with the scent of their dinner and something darker, more primal. "Now, tell me, Will," he continued, his voice coaxing, "what are your instincts telling you about forgiveness? About me?"

Will felt a chill run through him, the gravity of Hannibal's inquiry striking a deep chord. He took a moment to gather his thoughts, his fork resting forgotten on his plate. "My instincts," he started slowly, "are conflicted. There's a part of me that seeks justice, a resolution to the chaos you've sown in my life. Yet," he paused, his eyes locked on Hannibal's, "there's another, more primal part that wants to understand you, to merge with your world in a way that transcends ordinary forgiveness."

Will leaned forward, his voice firmer. "You talk of gods and monsters, Hannibal, but perhaps we're merely humans grappling with divine emotions. My forgiveness... it may not be divine amusement or elegance. It feels like something rougher, more visceral. Something that binds us together, even as it tears at the seams of who we thought we were."

Hannibal leaned forward, his interest visibly piqued, pupils blown to full black. Will thought it impossible he could have once stated with reasonable confidence that he didn't find the doctor interesting. With the extended eye contact, Will found his breathing heavier, a flush creeping up his neck. Hannibal was no less affected; his expression had turned predatory.

Will could almost hear the unspoken questions swirling in Hannibal's mind, the curiosity about what forgiveness meant to him, and how he envisioned achieving it. "Forgiveness, Will, is a complex gift, often wrapped in layers of pain and understanding," Hannibal mused, his voice smooth as he leaned in slightly. "Tell me, what do you believe it would take for you to reach that state?"

Feeling a mischievous pull at the corners of his mouth, Will responded with a hint of defiance, "Maybe I'm finding myself feeling particularly capricious," his voice carrying a mocking edge. "I want to withhold my grace just a little longer. To see... how well you dance around the flames of not having it." The words hung between them, a challenge laid bare, inviting Hannibal to step closer into the fire Will was stoking.

Hungrily, Hannibal leaned in closer, the air charged between them. "And what, dear Will, would it take for me to earn your grace? What must I do to coax that forgiveness from you?" His voice was a low growl, desperate for insight into Will's complex heart.

Cheeky and confident despite the undercurrent of tension, Will responded with a sly grin, "I have some ideas." His eyes gleamed with a mixture of challenge and promise. "I think it should start with *you* being at *my* mercy."

Hannibal inhaled sharply and silently–a staccato breath–nearly tasting the desire in the air. "I'd be very interested to hear more on that, my dear Will." He waited a beat, maintaining eye

contact with a smug and curious Will, until Hannibal's eyes dropped to their plates. "However, first, I have made us a delicious blood orange sorbet with chocolate shavings for dessert."

Dessert was enjoyable, both refreshing and sharp. As they finished, Hannibal excused himself to the kitchen, the sound of running water and the rhythmic clinking of dishes punctuating the quiet of the dining room. He left with a promise, refilling Will's glass with whiskey one last time before he vanished into the steaming warmth beyond the swinging door.

Drawn by a magnetic pull, Will approached the commanding painting on the wall, 'Leda and the Swan.' He stood there, absorbed, as the violent grace of the brush strokes unfolded before him—each line and curve weaving a story of power and surrender. The room filled with the distant, domestic sounds of Hannibal tidying up, a stark contrast to the silent intensity of the painting.

Will found himself reflecting on the evening's interactions. The painting, with its tumultuous depiction of mythological struggle, mirrored the dynamics of his dinner with Hannibal—each a dance of dominance and submission cloaked in an elegant guise. Alone with his thoughts, the layers of the image deepened in resonance, reflecting the complex interplay that had unfolded between him and Hannibal. The art, like their conversation, was a layered interplay of exposure and restraint, dominance and yielding, all encapsulated within the boundaries of refined taste and cultured surroundings.

A few minutes later, the sounds in the kitchen ceased, signaling Hannibal's imminent return. "I don't know that you've ever commented on this particular painting," he stated. Will didn't need to look to know that Hannibal was approaching; the shift in the air was enough, a subtle change that spoke of his presence.

"I've always found it to be an interesting choice of art," Will commented, his gaze fixed on the painting that dominated the room. He stepped closer to it, drawn in by the raw intensity it depicted. "Leda and the Swan. It's quite… compelling."

As Will examined the painting, he sensed Hannibal's approach, the slight increase in the air temperature announcing his nearness. Will felt the heat of Hannibal's presence even before he came to stand almost flush against Will's back. When Hannibal spoke, his voice was a soft whisper against Will's curls, injecting heady power into Will's veins, affirming the magnet pull he had over Hannibal.

"Yes, it is a piece that demands attention," Hannibal murmured, his breath ghosting over the shell of Will's ear. The sensation was unexpected, yet Will subtly leaned back just a fraction —not out of need, but as a deliberate test of Hannibal's reactions.

"The power dynamic is fascinating—Zeus disguised as a swan, Leda caught between struggle and submission," Hannibal continued, clearly drawing parallels meant to provoke.

Will took a sip of his whiskey, the liquid's burn contrasting sharply with the slow heat Hannibal's proximity brought. "Isn't it curious how lines blur in the throes of passion? How

valiant struggle can so easily turn into willful surrender?" Will's voice was low, intentional, his words laced with control as he turned the conversation subtly back towards Hannibal, continually challenging him.

The proximity of Hannibal was intoxicating, but Will used it to his advantage. Each tickle of breath against his sensitive ear, each word laden with double meanings, was cataloged as another point where he could assert his dominance. His body's reaction—both to the whiskey and Hannibal—was undeniable, but Will harnessed this, turning what could be perceived as vulnerability into a display of his own power.

"Hannibal," Will said, turning to face him, maintaining a small but decisive distance as a physical manifestation of his control. "In this story, who do you see yourself as?" The curiosity shone brightly in Will's eyes, his expression unable to mask the genuine intrigue stirring within him as he awaited Hannibal's response.

"Zeus, of course." Hannibal's eyes flickered with a mixture of surprise and delight at Will's directness. "And you, Will? If I am Zeus, are you Leda, or are you something more?"

"Neither," Will breathed, his gaze intense. "I see myself as the painter. The one who controls how the story is interpreted, who commands the brush and colors the canvas at will. As for you, Hannibal," Will let loose a raspy chuckle, "I might say you're Leda in this scenario, not Zeus. Caught between struggle and submission."

Hannibal's demeanor shifted, primarily wary yet visibly intrigued—Will was indeed a skilled fisherman. "Is that what you seek to accomplish with me, Will? My submission?" Will caught the nearly hidden flicker of desire in Hannibal's eyes at the notion.

"I think, to reach an equilibrium, a state of forgiveness, it's not merely what I seek. It's what I *need* ," Will confessed, his voice low, knowing well that Hannibal, while likely intrigued, was uncomfortable with the idea of relinquishing control.

Hannibal maintained his composure, though his eyes narrowed slightly. "Submission is not in my nature," he said after a moment, his voice firm. The tension between them mounted, a silent battle of wills unfolding before Hannibal finally conceded, "But you, Will, seem to be an exception to every rule."

Will nodded, feeling a sense of victory mixed with the weight of responsibility as he pondered the warmth of the whiskey in his hand. "You see, Doctor," he began, a slight southern drawl coloring his tone as the alcohol loosened his tongue, "you stripped away my dignity. Now it's my turn. Quid pro quo. You value your dignity above all else, finding it in your meticulous control. It could be enough, to have you at my mercy, to keep you completely at my command."

Hannibal's eyes sparkled with both intrigue and wariness. "Is this why you chose whiskey over wine tonight, Will? A first attempt at asserting your control, knowing that I prefer wine? I must admit, I was quite curious about your motivations."

Will nodded, his gaze unwavering. "I can't kill you. So I thought it might be prudent to redirect such... passionate feelings. You've always taught me the value of harnessing what's

natural, steering it toward a necessary end."

Hannibal frowned slightly, the lines of his face hardening in a mix of resignation and discomfort. "Is there no other way forward?" he asked, his voice tinged with a rare hint of vulnerability. As he spoke, Will circled the dining room, finally stopping behind Hannibal, effectively reversing their roles from just a few minutes prior.

Allowing vulnerability to seep into his tone, Will breathed out and said, “I need this Hannibal. I want to move forward. But without this, I… can’t.”

Suddenly faced with the irresistible urge to touch Hannibal, Will stepped in, closing the distance between their bodies. As Will pressed close, from knee to shoulder, a palpable electricity sparked between them, each point of contact crackling with the tension of unspoken promises and pent-up desires. The heat radiating from their bodies mingled, enveloping them in a charged atmosphere that thrummed with potential.

“You’ll have to trust me.” Will resisted the overwhelming urge to lick at Hannibal’s ear, or nip at his neck. He wanted Hannibal fraught with tension, like a bow strung tight and quivering, ready to snap. As it was, he allowed his hands to ghost across Hannibal’s waist, fluttering around but never firmly gripping.

“And why should I trust you?” Was that a light trembling Will felt beneath his hands? He knew he had Hannibal precisely where he wanted him. The slight tremor gave him the confidence to push further.

A chuckle escaped, and Will’s tone grew darker, voice dropping half an octave. “You shouldn’t. But we both know you can’t help it. You’re curious, intrigued… starving. For me.” Hannibal emitted a low, involuntary moan, a sound that vibrated between them and into Will’s core, thick with need and surrender. Will tilted his head in, placing his lips millimeters from the skin of Hannibal’s neck. “So you’ll let me do what I need, even if it's against your better judgment.”

At Will’s words, Hannibal–if possible–grew more tense, body frozen in statuesque rigidity. Muscles locked, breath suspended. With a heave, Hannibal’s body came back to life; he took in a great inhale and then exhaled, allowing his body to settle against Will's chest with a subtle shift of weight, signaling a quiet capitulation. The warmth and remaining tension in Hannibal's muscles, easing into Will's embrace, spoke louder than words—a tangible, thrilling surrender that exceeded Will's expectations.

As Hannibal's body subtly trembled under the pressure of their proximity, Will responded instinctively by tightening his embrace around Hannibal’s waist. The slight shake of Hannibal’s shoulders and the rapid rise and fall of his chest transmitted directly to Will’s fingertips, drawing him even closer. Surprised by the vulnerability emanating from Hannibal —a man usually cloaked in impenetrable composure—Will felt a surge of protectiveness mixed with curiosity.

His hands settled more securely, his fingers pressing gently into Hannibal’s sides, providing a solid, grounding presence. He leaned forward, his breath mingling with the cooler air around

Hannibal’s neck. The soft brush of Will’s lips against the sensitive skin there sent a visible shudder through Hannibal, his breath hitching momentarily in response.

They stood locked in this embrace, the world narrowing down to the shared space of their intermingled breaths. Gradually, Hannibal’s breathing deepened, became more rhythmic, his body yielding to the calm steadiness of Will’s hold. Each exhale seemed to release a little more of the tension that had built up between them.

In the quiet that enveloped them, Will’s whisper was barely audible, “That’s it.” The vibration of his voice seemed to resonate directly into Hannibal’s ear, eliciting a soft swallow from him—a subtle, yet poignant gesture of continued surrender. Even as Hannibal’s body began to unwind, his muscles relaxing under Will’s unwavering grip, his breaths grew deeper and more controlled. Each inhale and exhale was a silent testament to the trust and tumult of their connection, painting a vivid picture of a dynamic powerfully shifted, yet intimately shared.

Will straightened with one breath to Hannibal’s neck. “I should give you time to… consider what I’m proposing." A small whine broke free of Hannibal’s chest; he turned to gaze at Will nodding his understanding. “I think I’ll be going,” he said, noting the flicker of distress crossing Hannibal’s features. “I’ll see you later this week.” Will said, his voice softening, and he observed subtle hints of deep emotional turmoil beneath the surface of Hannibal’s composed veneer.

After a moment, Hannibal composed himself, his posture regaining its usual meticulous control, his person suit zipping back up. "Of course. Let me show you to the door," he replied, managing to keep his voice steady despite a slight catch in his breath.

At the door, Hannibal helped Will into his coat, the action smooth and nurturing. After an evening dominated by Will’s assertive control, this small act of caretaking by Hannibal felt reassuringly familiar, grounding their dynamic in a semblance of normalcy. As Will prepared to leave, he paused to caress Hannibal’s face briefly, and whispered, “Thank you.” Whether he was thanking him for the dinner or the intimacy remained unclear, but the sincerity in his eyes could not be mistaken.

Hannibal’s response was a slight nod, his eyes locking with Will’s. His voice was low, imbued with an unwavering devotion that echoed the intensity of the evening as he said, “For you, Will, anything.”

Alone at home after such an intense evening, Will found himself pacing the length of his living room, his thoughts racing: *What the hell am I doing?* Yet, despite the turbulence of the night, every moment had felt charged with an undeniable rightness, as if they were finally stepping onto a path long meant for them.

Will paused by the window, gazing out into the dark. The evening's events replayed in his mind—the intense conversations, the charged silences, the subtle shifts in power. It all felt predestined, necessary, as if their entire history—the good, the bad, and the undeniably ugly—had been leading to this. *We had to go through everything to get here,* he thought,

acknowledging that their past, fraught with manipulations and revelations, was not only baggage but a foundation.

Exhausted, Will finally turned away from the window. The weight of the night's revelations and the emotional exertion pulled at him. He made his way to his bedroom, his steps slow, heavy with contemplation and a deep-seated anticipation for what was yet to come.

Collapsing into bed, the cool sheets a stark contrast to the heat of his thoughts, Will expected sleep to elude him. However, the exhaustion of the evening's emotional gymnastics quickly overtook him. His body relaxed, and surprisingly, sleep enveloped him swiftly and deeply.

Sparks of Heat

Chapter Notes

beta'd by Debbie_e <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will stood before the crime scene perusing the notes left for him by Beverly and the other techs, each detail meticulously documented yet screaming of chaos. His eyes traced the evidence of escalation: two victims this time, their final moments marked by a savagery that was creeping closer to the city's heart. *He's definitely refining his monster,* Will thought, his gaze lingering on the photographs that captured the visceral horror in stark, unforgiving detail.

Taking a deep breath, Will closed his eyes, the cacophony of the crime scene techs and ambient outdoor noise fading into a distant hum. He let his mind loosen, drift, and then sharply focus as he summoned the golden pendulum. It swung before him, its arc slicing through the air with a silent *fwum* . His heartbeat, unnaturally loud in his ears, began to slow, syncing with the rhythmic swaying.

With another measured inhale, his eyes snapped open.

Beside him, the stag stood, its imposing form coated in blood and gore, a gruesome yet majestic figure waiting silently for instruction. Will's voice was a low command, resonant with power. "Kill."

He watched, almost in reverence, as the stag charged. The violence was balletic, each movement precise as it savaged the imagined foes, tearing and goring with a wild, primal grace. Blood spattered, painting the dark scene with vibrant strokes of red. A dark satisfaction welled up within Will—the raw, unadulterated power of controlling such ferocity was exhilarating.

As the stag subdued the final victim, Will's internal monologue churned with complex emotions. The act was horrific yet strikingly beautiful. The power he wielded felt right, aligning deeply with something primal within him. But alongside that power surged a joy that seemed at odds with the sheer brutality he orchestrated.

Standing there, watching the stag pant heavily, its sides heaving with exertion, Will felt the pieces of a complex puzzle click into place. This joy wasn't just about mastery or control—it was the profound relief and euphoria of his internal landscape perfectly mirroring the physical manifestation of violence. The sensation was intoxicating, a heady blend of freedom and complete alignment with the most base of instincts.

Suddenly, the perspective shifted. It was no longer the stag but Will himself who was delivering the fatal blows, feeling the resistance give way under his hands, the heat of blood against his skin. It was both jarring and deeply satisfying.

With a reluctant blink, Will stepped back from the edge of the reconstruction, the scene returning to its mundane reality, Jack gazing at him expectantly. He breathed out slowly, trying to steady the lingering tremble of adrenaline and excitement.

“I know what he felt,” Will muttered, almost to himself, before turning to relay his findings to Jack. As he spoke, Will felt the savage, primal mindset of the killer clinging tenaciously to the fringes of his consciousness. It was a mindset devoid of civility, where thoughts weren't clouded by morality or human decency—only the raw, unfettered instincts of ripping, maiming, tearing. Beneath the killer's mundane exterior lurked a beast, its presence obscured by a thin veneer of normalcy yet pulsating with a dark, ferocious energy.

Will considered the distinctiveness of the killer's mindset. He found an odd sense of kinship in that savage clarity, resonating with the empowering sensation he experienced when exerting control over Hannibal. The rush of dominance, the sheer thrill of bending Hannibal to his will, mirrored the unbridled ferocity of the mindset he had borrowed. Yet, as intoxicating as it was to step into such primal shoes, Will recognized the necessity of distancing himself from it.

With a measured breath, he consciously began to peel away the layers of the killer’s psyche, a deliberate mental effort to reclaim his own more structured, rational way of thinking. The savage instincts slowly receded, pushed back into the depths of his mind where they belonged, as Will fortified the boundaries of his identity. It was a necessary expulsion, ensuring that he remained anchored not just in his own morality but in the reality of who he was beyond the influence of the dark impulses that so often brushed against his consciousness.

Will shook himself, clearing the remnants of the killer's cold mindset. He quickly wrapped up his discussion with Jack, providing the necessary insights with a practiced detachment. After ensuring all pertinent information had been delivered, he excused himself and headed home, seeking the comfort and normalcy of his own environment to reset and recover from the day’s invasive mental journey.

The past several days had been a whirlwind for Will. He had juggled the usual demands of his teaching duties, engaged in the intense scrutiny of a suspect tied to the savage killings, and received an unexpected visit from Margot Verger. Drained from the constant switching between roles—professor, investigator, and unwilling confidant—Will found himself at his desk, grading papers with a detachment that belied the turmoil beneath his calm exterior. His attention was divided, with thoughts of Hannibal, the brutal nature of their suspected killer, and the intriguing visit from Margot swirling through his mind like a storm. This tangled web of thoughts created a complex tapestry in his psyche, each thread pulling with its own insistent demand.

The previous day had seen Will standing across from Randall Tier, as Jack probed with calculated questions; Will’s empathy had churned beneath the surface, immediately

recognizing the savage mindset that had marked the most recent crime scene. The realization had hit him with chilling clarity—Tier was their killer. Every answer from Tier had echoed the primal ferocity Will had felt, a mirror to the beastly urges he had vicariously lived through at the crime scenes.

Will had then come to a further realization: Hannibal had likely known it was Tier all along, from the first scene at the truck stop. Jack had mentioned that Hannibal was the one who pointed him towards Tier, which only deepened Will's suspicion. Will rolled his eyes internally, a sarcastic thought crossing his mind, *of course he knew it was Tier, the bastard* . It dawned on him that Hannibal probably relished the idea of watching him piece it together, a twisted form of entertainment. But instead of waiting, Hannibal had opted to steer Jack, a move that irked Will. It was so like Hannibal to dangle the truth in plain sight, turning the investigation into his own private game with the FBI. Hannibal's knack for drawing in such violently inclined individuals seemed almost intentional, as if he were curating a dark and dangerous collection.

Will recognized he too fit neatly into this macabre gallery, a detail that sparked a twinge of jealousy within him—a feeling he promptly squashed. He resolved to be the crowning jewel and, unequivocally, the last. In Will's determined mind, there would be no others after him.

Seated in his quiet office, Will couldn't help but think of Hannibal's uncanny ability to attract danger, much like a beacon in the night. And amidst these reflections, he acknowledged his own draw towards Hannibal—a dangerous allure, like a moth to a flame. This recognition brought with it a mix of wry exasperation and disbelieving wonder, weaving through his thoughts with an intensity that was hard to shake.

Will removed his glasses, pausing to massage the corners of his eyes where the weight of both the frames and the day's toils had left a lingering pressure. The office around him lay in a rare state of quiet, the stacks of graded assignments on his desk a testament to his completed labor. He exhaled deeply, the stillness providing a temporary refuge from the usual bustle of Quantico, where constant interruptions often fractured his concentration.

Glancing at the clock, Will realized he was on a tight schedule if he wanted to make it to Baltimore on time. *Hannibal probably hates lateness, the pinnacle of rude behavior.* Yet, the rebel in him briefly flirted with the idea of testing Hannibal's limits.

But no, the notion of losing precious minutes with Hannibal proved more compelling than the urge to provoke. Will locked his office with a decisive click and briskly walked to his car, hardly feeling the chill of the evening air as the prospect of their meeting ignited a warm sense of anticipation. His recent conversations with Margot and the suspect Randall Tier had given him a lot to consider, a lot to discuss with the doctor. Will had no doubt in his mind that Tier was their killer, he just had to prove it.

As he left Quantico, the traffic demanded his attention, keeping his mind occupied with the mundane actions of driving his vehicle until he reached the less congested freeway. It was then that his thoughts drifted back to his conversation with Margot. He mulled over the ambiguity of his response to her request for a character reference for Hannibal, patient to patient.

But I've never been his patient, have I? he pondered, the question lacing his thoughts with a subtle air of satisfaction.

He wasn't sure if he had been particularly helpful to Margot, but he recognized the eerie parallels between Margot's repeated attempts to deal with her brother and his own confrontations with Hannibal. The juxtaposition wasn't lost on him, stirring a deeper contemplation about the cycles of manipulation they both endured.

"Try, try again," echoed through his thoughts, the mantra prompting a wry smile as he considered its implications. *Hannibal would certainly delight in seeing me try again* , Will thought with a smile. But Will didn't want to kill Hannibal anymore. Instead, he realized he needed an entirely new toolkit—one crafted not for elimination but for the nuanced arts of seduction and control. This wasn't just about overpowering Hannibal; it was about claiming him.

Speaking of tools… Recalling his conversation with Randall, Will considered the metaphorical tools he'd been leveraging for this new dance with Hannibal: deception, manipulation, even surrender as a form of control. These weren't just methods to be deployed but were becoming an integral part of his evolving strategy, elements he would refine and adapt as their relationship deepened.

Randall's comment about what lies in the skull tells you the job, and his further query about the fit of one's skin struck a chord. *I can imagine* , Will had responded, and it was truer than he'd let on. He assessed the "skin" he'd been trying to fit into–the good man, the stable profiler–and acknowledged how it had always chafed. This reflection led Will to ponder the metrics of success he– like Randall– had once used to define himself. Socializing, medication, stable employment— these were standards imposed from the outside, metrics that never truly suited him. Now, his metrics had shifted radically: following his instincts, embracing his darker impulses, and establishing a genuine, unmasked connection with Hannibal.

As the miles rolled beneath his tires, Will realized the drive was more than just a commute; it was a pivotal transition. He was leaving behind the remnants of who he was supposed to be and driving towards who he was becoming. The journey was deliberate, the destination charged with potential.

Will sat in the waiting room, his eyes tracing the familiar patterns of the Persian rug beneath his feet. The room was steeped in a meticulous calm, every detail curated to soothe and intrigue. His appointment time drew near, yet the minutes stretched, each second thick with anticipation. Will shifted slightly in his seat, the leather soft and creaking quietly under his weight. He could hear the faint, rhythmic ticking of the ornate clock on the wall, marking time in a steady, unrelenting cadence. As the second hand swept past the appointed time, the door finally opened.

"Will, come in," Hannibal greeted, lips curving into a faint smile at the sight of Will, his voice smooth and unperturbed as the door swung open.

The room was charged with a silent, heavy tension as they each took to their customary armchairs. Will, not caring for pleasantries, leaned forward slightly, eyes narrowing with a hint of challenge. “Did you know it was Tier?” His voice, sharp with both question and accusation, pierced the quiet.

Hannibal’s response was a simple tilt of his head, a gesture Will had come to understand meant affirmation without need for words.

“How did you know?” Will pressed, his tone laced with a mix of curiosity and accusation, eyes fixed firmly on Hannibal, searching for any flicker of evasion.

Reflecting back with an intense, thoughtful gaze, Hannibal began, “Years ago, I treated a patient who fit that profile. During our sessions, he had a revelation; he realized he was not merely a man, but an animal cloaked in human skin, driven by instincts both primal and predatory.” Hannibal’s voice took on a cadence that suggested both nostalgia and the gravity of such a transformation.

Will's mind raced as he absorbed Hannibal's words. “The savagery of the crime scene was that distinctive?” It was posed as a question, but the undertone was a stark realization that sparked a restless energy within him. Feeling an irresistible urge to move, he rose from his seat, his movements almost involuntary as he began to pace the room.

“One comes to recognize such... primal characteristics, especially when they come from within,” Hannibal replied, his voice a calm counter to the storm brewing in Will. The idea that Hannibal could so easily relate unsettled him, reminding Will of his own dark forays into understanding such minds.

“It seems as if he found a way to build a bridge between who he appears to be and what he now knows he’s become,” Hannibal continued, keeping Will in his line of sight as he continued to pace the room.

The small tendrils of jealousy pricked at Will’s mind; easily squashed, initially, but growing substantially with each word Hannibal spoke. He wandered from the window, fingertips grazing the heavy curtains, to the meticulously kept ravenstag statue. Each touch felt like a claim, a silent marking of territory, eerily reminiscent of Tier's animalistic instincts.

Hannibal, always observant, rose and made his way towards his desk, perhaps to create a physical and metaphorical distance from Will's palpable unrest. Will intercepted him, his hand shooting out to grab Hannibal’s forearm. The grip was firm, controlled, not enough to bruise but enough to offer a glimpse of his unspoken feelings. “How many have there been? Like Randall Tier or Margot Verger? Like *me* ?”

His tone was even, betraying little of the turmoil inside, but the contact–a rarity from Will, he knew–spoke volumes.

Hannibal paused, his eyes locking with Will’s. “Every patient is unique, Will.” A flicker of something—curiosity, surprise—passed briefly over his features before he regained his composure. "Margot visited you," he stated, not a question.

Will’s response was terse, his jaw setting slightly. "She did, but that's not what we're talking about right now." His voice held an edge, a clear signal that he would control the flow of their conversation.

Hannibal nodded slowly, capitulating with a slight incline of his head, acknowledging Will’s boundary. "Of course," he murmured, the hint of a smile playing at the corners of his mouth, amused and intrigued by Will's assertiveness. The brief acknowledgment granted Will a momentary upper hand, and he chose to seize it further.

Releasing Hannibal’s arm, Will stepped back, his voice dropping into a caustic, almost mocking tone. “So, not special then. Just another mundane variable in your experiments.” The words were a shield, veiling his need for reassurance with a façade of acidic passivity. Will’s expression was hard, the muscle in his jaw twitching slightly as he struggled with the vulnerability such jealousy exposed.

At that, Hannibal’s features tightened, a fleeting shadow crossing his usually impassive face. His eyes, deep and calculating, flickered with a hint of surprise or perhaps disappointment, observing Will with quiet intensity. As Will resumed his agitated pacing, the room seemed to shrink around him, the walls pulsing with a silent intensity that matched his internal turmoil. *I’m not special, I’m just a pawn in Hannibal’s game–not even the winning piece.*

Hannibal's voice broke through his thoughts, a calm, commanding presence in the charged atmosphere. "Will."

Will barely heard his name; he couldn't stop. The movement felt necessary, like a caged animal pacing its confines. He was disappointed in himself, frustrated at his own need for Hannibal's reassurance– no matter how cleverly he might cloak it in sarcasm and disdain. *It’s a weakness,* he thought bitterly, *one I can’t afford.*

Hannibal maintained a discreet watchfulness over Will, his presence unobtrusive yet constant. Each of Will's frenzied steps seemed shadowed by Hannibal's calculated stillness; it was a quiet mimicry that subtly bridged the space between them without encroachment, reminiscent of a shadow at the periphery of vision.

The room's layout funneled Will's restless path closer to the door. It wasn't conscious, his feet carrying him towards a potential escape from the intensity of his emotions and from Hannibal's constant regard. Yet, even as he edged towards the threshold, Hannibal remained close, a steady presence that both anchored and unnerved him.

Hannibal’s voice was softer this time, a gentle entreaty laced with an undercurrent of urgency. "Will, please."

The words fell from Hannibal's lips, echoing the wild fantasies that had coursed through Will's mind in the solitude of his shower earlier that day. The sudden materialization of those thoughts into reality shocked him from his reflective state, a jolt of awareness racing through his body.

In a reflexive motion, Will's hand shot out. He grabbed the front of Hannibal’s finely tailored suit, pulling him around sharply until Hannibal's back was against the wall. Will pressed in

close, his body almost flush against Hannibal's. He was aware of the raw energy pulsing through him, and he wanted Hannibal to understand, unequivocally, that he belonged to Will.

The room was charged with a heavy silence, punctuated only by their breath. They held each other's gaze, a silent battle of wills and desires playing out in their eyes. Will wasn't entirely sure what his face betrayed; he felt wild, untamed. Animalistic.

A glimmer of curiosity crossed Hannibal's face as he absorbed the intensity of Will's actions. Clearly, he was still not used to Will being this direct and assertive, despite dinner the other night. The surprise was subtle, a slight raise of his eyebrows, a slight parting of his lips—an acknowledgment of the shift in dynamics that was still fresh and unexpected.

As the seconds stretched on, Will could see signs of arousal building in Hannibal, his pupils dilating until the maroon of his irises was swallowed by the black, his lungs dragging in air just a little faster. It was a raw, physical response that Hannibal couldn't hide, adding fuel to the fire that Will felt within himself. For a fleeting moment, Will entertained the thought that maybe, just maybe, Hannibal craved this as fervently as he did.

Before Will could act further, and in a voice soft yet laden with a depth of emotion, Hannibal murmured, "As I said before, you are an exception to every rule. There is nobody else like you, my magnificent boy."

The words struck Will directly, a visceral arrow to his desire. Without hesitation, his voice rough with emotion and command, Will responded, "You are mine."

Hannibal's breath escaped him in a soft, involuntary puff, his hips making an instinctive twitch upwards, almost grazing Will's leg. His eyes fluttered shut, and he turned his face away slightly, as if the intensity of his own longing was too much too bear directly, as if the very air had thickened with the gravity of his unraveling composure. Will, observing every subtle cue with keen interest, reached out to gently grasp Hannibal's chin. Firmly, he guided Hannibal's face back towards his, compelling their eyes to lock.

Hannibal's affirmation was barely a breath, a whisper that seemed to hang suspended in the charged air between them, yet it carried the weight of a confession: "Yes."

In response, Will pressed in closer, eliminating any remaining spaces as their hips met in a deliberate, forceful contact. The unmistakable hardness of their bodies against each other sparked a surge of heat that coursed through Will's veins. He held back a whine, the sensation overwhelming yet profoundly satisfying. While Will's head threatened to drop to Hannibal's forehead, his grip on Hannibal's suit tightened as he anchored himself in the moment, driven by a mix of desire and the need to assert his claim.

"Say it again," Will demanded, his voice low and commanding, fingers tightening on Hannibal's chin. It was more than a request; it was a deep-rooted need to hear the words, to confirm the shift in their dynamic that Will had instigated.

Hannibal's response came on the barest of exhales, a slight breath that still managed to carry his submission to Will's ears clearly and unmistakably. The words were soft yet resonant, filled with the gravity of their implications.

“I am yours.”

Will felt his arousal surge at the acknowledgment, and hoped that Hannibal couldn’t discern the subtle shift in his scent. But the slight upturn of Hannibal's lips–a knowing smirk–confirmed his fears. Hannibal could smell it; he could always smell it.

With barely a thought beyond wiping that smug expression off Hannibal’s mouth, Will crushed their mouths together in a ravenous kiss. Hannibal tasted divine, an intoxicating blend of sharp, rich wine and musky, raw desire. Will couldn’t get enough, his tongue greedily licking into Hannibal’s mouth, chasing the flavor, pulling the sweetness of the wine and the deeper taste of lust directly from Hannibal’s tongue. Will felt their teeth clash with their urgency, their passion, each movement loaded with intensity as their desires converged in electrifying contact.

Hannibal whimpered with need as his hands flew to Will; one hand tangled in the thick curls at the back of his head, the tight grip anchoring Will further in the moment, while the other hand found its way to Will’s hips, holding tightly as Will pressed in with slow, deep drags, both groaning with relief as they met each other stroke for stroke. Sparks of heat radiated from Will’s groin up into his belly; he felt electrified from the inside out.

Will’s hands moved from gripping Hannibal’s suit to exploring of their own accord, pulling him even closer, if such a thing were possible. There was no such thing as too close; Will’s urge to merge completely with Hannibal, to dissolve the boundaries between them, was overwhelming. He needed it–would die without it.

Will’s hands frantically ripped at Hannibal’s tie, loosening it just enough to open the top two buttons of Hannibal’s dress shirt in an effort to expose more skin. He moaned with need at the revealed canvas, allowing his lips to trail from Hannibal’s mouth down to his jaw and then to his neck– *god, Hannibal’s* ***neck*** .

The taste of Hannibal’s skin was salty and clean; it was intoxicating, better than anything Will had imagined. It felt so right, so perfectly attuned to the craving that had built up inside him. Will's lips pressed harder, his mouth sucking at the tender flesh of Hannibal's neck, drawing blood closer to the surface. This subtle shift deepened the flavor, adding a faint, tantalizing bitterness that Will found himself chasing. He eagerly moved along Hannibal’s neck, leaving a necklace of bruises that would only deepen over the coming days. Each dark imprint was a declaration, a clear message that Hannibal was *his.*

At the back of Will’s mind, a seductive voice whispered, *bite him* . Swept up in sensation and primal need, Will allowed his instincts to take over as his teeth grazed against the delicate, soft skin of Hannibal’s neck. Hannibal’s hips bucked wildly as Will rolled the sensitive skin between his lips. In response, Will used his body weight to press Hannibal’s hips back into the wall. “Stay,” he ordered. And then, without hesitation, Will darted back into Hannibal’s neck and bit down.

It was euphoric. Will’s teeth met a soft resistance before piercing into the tissue below, reminiscent of biting into a sweet plum. The taste of iron flooding his mouth settled something in him, instincts singing with the primal rightness of this act. Hannibal’s entire body jerked sharply in response to the bite, a strangled moan escaping his lips as if torn from

the depths of his being. This involuntary sound, raw and vulnerable, vibrated against Will's lips, heightening his fervor.

As Will felt the warm blood trickle into his mouth, a mirrored frenzy of bloodlust and raw desire surged within him. Will wasn't sure he could stop; now that he'd tasted Hannibal's blood, there was no going back. This was not just a crossing of boundaries; it was obliterating them. *You're a part of me now,* he thought fiercely, *in ways I can't undo.*

As Will dug his teeth in deeper, Hannibal tilted his neck with a guttural moan, tilting his head to the side, giving Will more room. The hand fisted in Will's hair tightened its grip, sending a sharp, exhilarating tingle zipping from his scalp down his spine, the blend of pleasure and pain almost too much. Will's groan mingled with the gasps Hannibal was letting free, mixing to create a beautiful symphony, one that was all their own.

Will's hands found Hannibal's collar, urgently tearing more buttons open—a visceral need compelling him. Suddenly, Will's phone began to ring. Hannibal made a noise, a frustrated growl at the interruption. Will pulled back just enough to meet Hannibal's gaze, fingers still working at his shirt buttons, lips stained with the bright red of Hannibal's own blood, eyes burning with a wild fervor as he snarled, "Ignore it."

The phone rang, disregarded, as Will lunged forward to capture Hannibal's lips once more. A moan vibrated between them as Hannibal's tongue darted out, tasting his own blood mingling with Will's saliva—a taste that seemed to ignite an inferno of desire within both. As Hannibal savored the sharp, metallic tang, Will felt his own arousal surge, teetering on the brink of overwhelming.

The phone's insistent ring cut through the air again, this time drawing a wild, frustrated growl from Will. Reluctantly, they parted, both panting and disheveled from the intensity of their encounter. Will took a moment, his eyes sweeping over Hannibal's rarely discomposed figure, taking in every detail of his undone appearance that he himself had caused. The sight was satisfying, a testament to the passion that had just unfolded between them.

There was something about Hannibal's expression, the way he winced when he tried to move and reached to adjust his slacks. *Did he just…?* Sure enough, Will glanced down and saw a small wet spot on Hannibal's front. The thought that Will had made Hannibal come *untouched* had Will salivating for more. It was a raw victory, seeing such composure unraveled by his own actions.

"Biting, huh? Of course that does it for you," Will chuckled breathlessly. The look Hannibal shot him was withering. Just then, Will's phone started ringing again. *Jesus christ, Jack.* Slowly, he walked over and reached into his coat pocket to pull it out. Before he could get to it, the call went to voicemail. He checked the phone—5 missed texts, 3 missed calls, and—*yep, there's the fourth call coming through.*

Will answered the phone, trying to mask the thrill still coursing through his veins. Jack sounded out of breath as he yelled, “Will, why the hell weren’t you answering?”

"Um, H-Dr Lecter," Will caught himself just in time, correcting hastily, "uh, he has a 'no phones' policy during sessions."

Jack, clearly annoyed, responded, “Well, I need you. A killer…” Jack began relaying the details, but Will found it difficult to focus. He was still caught up in the scorching eye contact he was maintaining with Hannibal, the phantom flames still licking at his groin. Hannibal hadn’t moved off the wall yet; his chest was still slightly heaving, his eyes glassy yet sharpening the longer Will held his gaze.

"... texted you the details of your flight. Be there." *Wait, flight?* Jack hung up before Will could respond. *Bastard* .

Will stood still for a moment, taking a deep breath to guard against the frustration boiling within him. The idea of tearing himself away from this, from Hannibal, *now*– it was almost unbearable. Every fiber of his being screamed to ignore Jack's call, to stay and explore the new, exhilarating dynamics that had just begun to unfold between them. As he turned to face Hannibal again, the raw, unmasked desire in both their eyes was palpable, almost tangible in its intensity.

"Jack needs me," Will muttered, the words tasting bitter on his tongue. He felt a resentful anger towards Jack, not just for the interruption, but for the constant demands that pulled him away from where he truly wanted to be. With a reluctant sigh, Will started collecting himself, fixing his shirt, and attempting to restore some semblance of order to his appearance.

Hannibal's expression was a complex storm of emotion as he struggled to recompose himself, the remnants of his animalistic instincts clawing just beneath the surface. His eyes flickered with frustration and a raw, palpable hunger, almost as if he were poised to pounce, ready to keep Will tethered to him indefinitely. The room thrummed with the tension of their halted intimacy, the air still electrified by the potent connection they had ignited moments earlier. Will's gaze swept over Hannibal, taking in the flush across his cheeks, the slight panting that hadn't fully calmed, the trickle of blood staining his shirt.

A smirk twitched at the corner of his mouth as he absorbed the beautiful havoc he had wrought upon the composed figure of Dr. Lecter. Despite Jack's authority to call him away, Will reveled in the potent, intoxicating control he held over Hannibal in these moments. The possessive instincts that had roared so fiercely earlier in the session, urging him to mark Hannibal visibly, now hummed contentedly within him, soothed by the undeniable proof of his claim.

Will's steps carried him back to Hannibal, drawn by a force stronger than the pull of duty. He leaned in, pressing a chaste kiss to Hannibal's lips, a soft seal to their tumultuous encounter. Hannibal's response was instinctive, a slight nip at Will's lip, trying to morph the simplicity into something deeper, more heated. But Will drew back with a quick, playful smirk, his eyes sparkling with mischief.

"Patience, Doctor," Will teased, his tone light but edged with the unyielded control of their dynamic. "Good things come to those who wait." Will noted the monster behind Hannibal's eyes rear at the denial, but Hannibal reigned it in. With a final parting look, Will moved towards the door. "Until next time, Dr. Lecter," Will said, his voice low and slightly rough, tinged with a mix of amusement and challenge.

The following morning, Will trudged through the airport, each step a laborious effort, his body moving more from habit than any conscious decision. His eyes were rimmed with fatigue, and his shoulders sagged under the weight of a hastily packed bag and a pervasive sense of irritation. "This case had better be fucking worth it," he muttered under his breath, his voice barely audible above the dull hum of the crowded terminal.

The frustration that gnawed at him stemmed from Jack's sudden interruption the day before. They had been teetering on the brink of a monumental breakthrough; Will could almost taste it in the charged atmosphere of the office, see it in the rivulets of blood that had stained Hannibal's pristine shirt, and feel it in the intensity of Hannibal's half-lidded, lust-addled gaze beneath his fingertips. And as if pulling him out of that appointment wasn't disruptive enough, Jack had compounded the inconvenience by booking him on a 5 am flight the following morning.

Grudgingly, Will admitted to himself that it could have been worse—he could have been on Jack's 10 pm flight the previous night. That would have been impossible. There was simply no way to manage the logistics: getting back to Wolf Trap, arranging care for his dogs, grabbing his go bag, and returning to the airport in time. As it stood, he had barely managed those necessities and was operating on a meager three hours of sleep.

Dragging his feet toward the nearest coffee shop, Will's mind was not on the case file Jack had handed him but on the urgent need for caffeine. Once he had a coffee in hand and confirmed his gate number—for the third time—he'd settle down and pore over the details of the case. But first, he needed to anchor himself in the reality of the present moment, starting with a strong cup of coffee to cut through the fog of exhaustion clouding his mind.

With a steaming cup of coffee finally in hand, Will continued his slog through the airport to find his gate. Airports were never his favorite places—they were too loud, too crowded, and the harsh fluorescent lighting only compounded the assault on his senses. Today, these irritations felt magnified, a testament to his fatigue and the lingering annoyance at being yanked from his session with Hannibal.

The mere thought of Hannibal sent an unexpected jolt of arousal through him, stirring him in ways that were both inconvenient and untimely. "Jesus, not now," Will muttered to himself, adjusting his carry-on over his shoulder as a makeshift shield. He pressed on, weaving through clusters of travelers, his destination finally coming into view.

Relief washed over him when he reached his gate and found that boarding wouldn't start for another hour. Seizing the opportunity for some semblance of productivity, Will settled into a seat somewhat removed from the main throng of passengers, opened his briefcase, and extracted the case files Jack had given him.

As he flipped through the documents, his frustration flared anew. The local law enforcement's documentation of the previous crime scenes was abysmal—careless, incomplete, and barely useful. "If somebody had just done their job, I could have looked at photos and saved us a goddamn flight," he grumbled under his breath, ignoring the strange look he received from the woman sitting a few seats down from him. The files were a mess of half-coherences and missed details, nothing like the meticulous federal records he was accustomed to working with.

Jack had informed him that they'd received a call about a new scene, one they were preserving specifically for Will's expertise. While the thought of entering a fresh scene piqued his interest, it was tempered by irritation at the unnecessary travel and the poor state of the existing case files. With a heavy sigh, Will leaned back in his seat, sipping his coffee and steeling himself for what was to come, knowing full well that once again, it would be up to him to piece together the chaos others had left behind.

As Will scanned the poorly documented case files, his thoughts inevitably drifted back to Hannibal and their increasingly convoluted relationship. There was an undeniable satisfaction in seeing Hannibal yield to his commands. How long had Will done everything Hannibal had asked him to do? How long had Will trusted Hannibal implicitly? A part of Will knew that taking control was exactly what he needed to do. It was the ultimate reversal, a necessary shift to balance the months Hannibal had pulled the strings. *Will* was the one running the experiment, watching how *Hannibal* responded to different stimuli. And the control went deeper than that; it felt like reclaiming something Hannibal had taken from him.

Will had meant it when he told Hannibal that this was their only way forward–the only way for them to have a prayer for forgiveness. Yet, the other part of him, a part that Will wasn't ready to deeply examine, wondered about Hannibal's motives. What was Hannibal getting out of this? Hannibal was a man who was always fifteen steps ahead of Will–how could Will be certain that he wasn't playing directly into Hannibal's hands again? Was Hannibal truly submitting to Will, or was this just another layer in Hannibal's game?

But then again, Will found himself wondering, *does it really matter? This is what I need.*

Will mulled over these recent developments, the complex dance of dominance and submission, his newfound agency brushing against the edges of his introspective nature. He realized it wasn't too late to walk away, to turn over everything he knew to Jack. He could still play the good agent, dangling the promise of Hannibal's downfall before Jack's eager eyes.

However, the mere idea of handing Hannibal over, of spilling their secrets, hit a nerve. Jack had never really cared about him, not really; Will was just a means to an end, a tool to capture the Chesapeake Ripper. The thought of betraying Hannibal twisted in his gut. Will found himself protective, almost territorial. Hannibal was his to challenge, his to unravel, or even to destroy—if it ever came to that. The idea of Jack claiming any part of Hannibal sparked an almost primal defiance in Will.

No, Will didn't want to kill Hannibal. That avenue, once a dark and tempting path, now seemed too final, too easy. His ambitions for Hannibal had grown more complex, entangled in a web of control, understanding, and perhaps something resembling codependency. As he

sat in the glaring light of the airport terminal, Will's resolve crystallized. Hannibal was his, in a way no one else could fully comprehend or challenge. And that was exactly how Will wanted it.

Chapter End Notes

p.s. if this was your jam, PLEASE tell me i thrive on y'alls wonderful comments <3

and if you wanna yell about this fic with me, come find me on tumblr @graciereadshannigram!

(unless, and i cannot believe i have to make this caveat, UNLESS you are a minor. obviously, you get to choose if you wanna read this, but please please please do not come try and engage with me about it. i am an adult 10+ years older than you, thanks!!)

Claiming

Chapter Notes

Beta-d by Debbie-e and hannibals-grahamcraker – both of whom are absolutely INCREDIBLE <3

Enjoy bbs!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jack's office was a small world wrapped in the musty aroma of aging paperwork and stale coffee—a stark departure from the understated elegance of Hannibal's quarters. Will paced, his fingertips grazing over desk clutter—old case files, scattered pens, a dusty lamp. Each brush of his hand against these relics of bureaucracy nudged him back into the role he was expected to play, a stark reminder of the duality of his existence.

"I need your final written report on the Wainwright case by tomorrow morning," Jack stated, his focus buried in a mountain of paperwork rather than on Will. His tone carried the usual command, yet it seemed distant, almost an afterthought.

“It’ll be on your desk by the end of today,” Will replied, his voice flat, his mind already dismissing the mundane task. The case itself had been straightforward, lacking the complexity that usually piqued his interest. He had filed away the details mentally, shelving them with other forgettable assignments. It had been two nights since Jack had pulled him from Hannibal's office—a calculated interruption that still irritated him. The call was a disruption neither minor nor forgiven.

Jack’s gaze finally lifted from the cluttered papers, locking onto Will’s agitated movements across the room. “How are things with Hannibal?” he prodded, his voice carrying a hint of impatience.

Will paused, straightening his posture as he turned to face Jack fully. The question, so direct, sparked a flicker of amusement at the irony of Jack’s ignorance beneath his calm exterior. In his mind, Will toyed with the truth, envisioning Jack’s horror at the candid response he dared not voice. *Well, if you must know, instead of delivering Hannibal to justice under the law, I’ve found it quite compelling to deliver him to justice under me.*

Instead, Will feigned frustration and played into the facade of the diligent FBI profiler stymied by his cunning suspect. “It’d be a lot easier if you didn’t keep dragging me away to look at other crime scenes,” he retorted sharply, his tone coated with a veneer of irritation that felt almost genuine. “You interrupted an appointment with him, Jack. Considering Hannibal’s nature, I’m sure you can imagine how he took that.”

The corners of Jack's mouth tightened, his brow furrowing in a mix of suspicion and concern. "I'm worried about the way you're handling this, Will. We can't afford to let him slip through the cracks," Jack replied, his tone laced with an implicit challenge.

"He's not giving me anything, Jack!" Will declared, arms sweeping out as an emphasis of his supposed exasperation. Inside, however, Will's thoughts were cool and calculated. As he feigned these outbursts of frustration, a part of him became detached from the performance, observing Jack's reactions with clinical interest. This was another form of manipulation, another layer of the game he and Hannibal delighted in playing. Every word, every gesture was a carefully placed step on a chessboard where Jack was an unwitting opponent, and Hannibal the prize neither of them could openly claim.

Navigating these interactions with Jack was a delicate balance. Will knew his allegiance had shifted irrevocably; the thrill of matching wits with Hannibal, of dancing on the knife-edge between deception and truth, was intoxicating in a way that his former pursuit of justice had never been. And yet, here he was, playing the part of the dutiful agent, sowing seeds of doubt while weaving a narrative that kept Jack hopeful, engaged, and ultimately, misled.

The realization that he might one day have to choose a final side, to openly betray Jack or to abandon the dark allure of Hannibal's world, lingered at the back of his mind. For now, he reassured Jack with the truth, his voice steady. "Every session is a game of chess, Jack. He's too smart to let anything slip by accident."

"Damn it, Will, you told me you're a good fisherman! You hook him, I land him! Are you telling me now that you aren't up to the job?" Jack's voice was a mix of frustration and bravado, a transparent attempt to exert control over the situation.

A flash of genuine irritation flared within Will at the challenge, but he masked it quickly with a cool smirk. "Hannibal is the best at this, Jack. It's going to take time. And it requires a subtlety," he paused, giving Jack a pointed look, "that isn't exactly your forte."

The tension in Jack's office was almost tangible, each line on Jack's furrowed brow and the slight quiver in his voice betraying his frustration and underlying concern. Yet, as Will observed Jack, his keen gaze noted no spark of true suspicion, only the predictable strain of a mentor weighed down by duty and disappointment.

Will leaned forward slightly, his voice lowering as he chose his words with a deliberate hesitance. "Jack, Hannibal is…when I say I'm not getting anything, I mean that…" Will paused, letting a sigh escape as if reluctantly conceding to a painful truth. "What if I'm wrong? What if we've all been too eager to suspect him based on my instincts alone?" His words, carefully chosen and laden with false self-doubt, floated between them, designed to plant seeds of uncertainty in Jack's mind. "Jack, my mind was on fire when I accused him. I didn't know what was going down. Hell, I was regularly hallucinating an elk that had raven feathers instead of fur."

This was a crucial play, a calculated expression of vulnerability meant to divert Jack's scrutiny away from Hannibal. Will knew the risk of weaving such doubts, especially with someone as perceptive as Jack, but his delivery was flawless, bordering on genuine self-doubt.

Jack straightened in his chair, his voice firm as he responded to Will's apparent uncertainty. "Will, what is this? We both know you were right about him. You've got instincts like no one else in this unit–including myself. They've never led us astray before."

Despite the conviction in Jack's words, Will's empathy caught something else–a glimmer, the smallest kernel of doubt that was reflected in a tiny downturn of his mouth. It was a momentary lapse, quickly covered by Jack's authoritative tone, but it was enough. Enough for Will to know his words had begun to take root, subtly altering the course of Jack's steadfast certainty.

Will maintained a neutral expression, masking the triumph bubbling beneath the surface as he pondered the potential of completely diverting Jack from Hannibal's scent. Internally, he weighed the scenarios: ideally, they would avoid any drastic actions, but the possibility of having to eliminate Jack loomed as a necessary evil. This wasn't driven by desire; it was simply cold calculation.

Yet, there was an undeniable, dark thrill in the notion—a perverse satisfaction in potentially turning the tables on the man who had so often pushed him to the edge, questioning his sanity and challenging his motives. As he stood there, suppressing the smile trying to play on the edge of his lips, Will could almost feel Hannibal's eyes on him, sensing the quiet approval from the shadows, affirming his actions and choices.

In that moment, as he watched Jack's earnest expression, Will savored the secret pleasure of deceit. It was a game he and Hannibal relished, a dance of manipulation and control that they performed with a precision that was almost artistic. The thrill of misleading Jack, of keeping him oblivious and on a leash, added a layer of excitement to the dangerous game they played.

"I know what I'm doing, Jack. I'll keep looking." Will stated with calculated assurance, his voice a steady, convincing cadence that masked the true depth of his duplicity. With a subtle nod, Will reassured Jack once more, his expression carefully composed to mask the thrill this game was giving him. "I'll hook him."

Before Jack could respond, they were interrupted by a knock at the door. Will turned, watching as Alana Bloom breezed in without waiting for an invitation, her head buried in the notes she was holding. She launched into a conversation, her voice carrying the smooth confidence of someone accustomed to holding court.

"Jack, I just wanted to update you on the forensic psychology course I've been covering. We're focusing on behavioral patterns that–" Her words faltered as she noticed Will, a slight hitch in her tone as her eyes widened just a fraction. "Will."

"I was just leaving," Will remarked, rising from his chair and giving Jack a nod of farewell. "I'm meeting Hannibal for lunch to discuss the killer who makes his scenes look like animal attacks." His voice was nonchalant, but his eyes were sharp, fixed on Alana.

Alana's expression tightened, the mention of Hannibal's name visibly unsettling her. "Will, are you sure you should be–"

“Should be what, Alana?” Will interrupted, his tone deceptively light. “Getting lunch with a colleague?” Without another word, Will strode to the door, his movements brusque, a clear refusal to continue the conversation. As he walked out, he heard Alana murmur something to Jack before she followed him out.

“Leave it alone, Alana,” he grumbled, voice nearly growling.

“Will!” Alana called, hurrying her steps to catch up to Will. “I’m not concerned about you meeting a colleague for lunch and you know it.” She paused, struggling to find the right words. “We used to be friends, Will. I don’t want to see you hurt him or yourself. I care about you.”

Will scoffed, shaking his head slowly as if disappointed by her misunderstanding. “We were never friends, Alana. Friends,” the air quotes were implied, “don’t treat each other the way you treated me. So keep your concern and professional curiosity away from me.”

Alana looked taken aback, her mouth opening but no words coming out immediately. “I was trying to help, I don’t think it’s healthy–”

Cutting her off once again, Will interjected, “I don’t think it was *healthy* for you to make me think I was crazy.” The venom in his voice was palpable, each word dripping with contempt. “But you did that anyway, didn’t you?”

His gaze was icy as he moved to step around her, pausing only when she reached out, her hand grazing his arm. “Will…” she trailed off, clearly at a loss.

“Good bye, Alana.” Will’s steps were quick and purposeful as he walked away, but inside, his emotions churned violently. His mind replayed the look on Alana’s face–confused, hurt, perhaps a little scared. *Good, she should feel scared.* Will wanted to feel vindicated or at least detached, but a bitter taste lingered in his mouth. He scoffed silently, a part of him sneering at Alana’s naïveté. *She’s still trying to save me. After everything that’s happened.* In the past, such a thought may have made him feel guilty for its unkindness bordering on cruelty, but it was a shield against the softer, more vulnerable parts of himself that Alana’s appearance had unwittingly prodded.

She’s just like the others, Will thought as he pushed through the doors and into the crisp air outside, *blind to what’s really happening, to what I really am with him.* But the truth was more complicated, and Will knew it. His connection with Hannibal was something no one else–not Jack, not Alana–could ever fully understand. It was his alone to navigate.

Climbing into his car, a swirl of frustration rose in his gut. His instincts had been roaring at him to stake his claim on Hannibal in front of both Jack and Alana. While he knew how important it was to stifle that urge, the restraint chafed at him, a vivid reminder of the delicate balancing act he was forced to maintain. Each step he took was weighted with the knowledge that his control was as much a shackle as it was a shield, keeping him from unleashing the full extent of his claim for all to see. This restraint, while necessary, left him wrestling with a nagging sense of incompletion, as if he’d left something crucial unsaid and unproven.

The thought of Alana even imagining she held a significant spot in Hannibal's life ignited a primitive anger in Will. He yearned to publicly declare his dominance, to clearly define the boundaries of his and Hannibal's relationship, dismissing any illusions Alana might harbor. It was an irrational, yet visceral need—to mark his territory, to dispel any challenge, no matter how foolish it seemed. The beast within him, fueled by jealousy and possessiveness, bristled at the mere notion of competition.

Simultaneously, an unexpected protective urge towards Alana tugged at his conscience, confusing him. Was he actually concerned for her safety around Hannibal, or was he simply rationalizing his possessiveness? This protective instinct seemed to extend naturally from his desire to shield Hannibal from Jack's investigations. Alana, with her dangerous proximity to uncovering the truth about Hannibal despite her current blindness, represented a risk. Will didn't wish her harm, but her potential to unravel everything hung ominously in the air like a storm cloud waiting to burst.

The air in Will's kitchen was thick with the rich, meaty scent of cooking dog food, a medley of scents that normally would have overwhelmed any other household. Will, however, was used to it, and had cracked open the kitchen window to let in the chilled winter evening air. The soft clatter of dog nails tapping rhythmically against the floor tiles played like a disjointed melody, oddly comforting in its familiarity. Returning home still tinged with the residue of his encounter with Alana, Will had sought refuge in the methodical process of preparing meals for his dogs–a task both mundane and meditative.

As he carefully measured and mixed, the repetitive motions helped unravel the tight coil of frustration and agitation that had wound tightly around his chest at Quantico. With each stir and scoop, his thoughts, though still occasionally drifting to Hannibal and Alana, began to settle. There was something about the simplicity of the task, the focus it demanded, that allowed him to regain a semblance of inner peace.

Yet even as he felt the calming influence of routine, the darker edges of his mind whispered of the depths he would plunge to keep Hannibal all to himself. In his mind, there were no boundaries left, no lines he wouldn't cross; the taste of Hannibal's blood had shattered any illusion of limits, leaving him with a profound and unsettling freedom.

Feeling the need for something stronger than the beer he had been sipping, Will reached for a bottle of whiskey and poured himself a generous measure. The amber liquid glinted in the kitchen light as it swirled into the glass, the familiar clink of ice soothing his nerves. He took a slow, deep sip, feeling the warmth spread through him, his muscles loosening with the burn of alcohol.

Perhaps he should build a fire, he thought, contemplating the comforting crackle and warmth it would bring. An evening with his dogs, cozied up to stay warm, had never failed to calm him. Stepping out of the kitchen, whiskey in hand, he headed towards the living room. His pace slowed as he noticed all of his dogs, usually already curled up on their beds at this time, now clustered together at the front door. Their bodies were tense, ears perked, tails stiff with alertness.

As he processed his dogs' behavior, a mix of curiosity and concern stirred in him. Will's mind raced through the possibilities–had Margot decided to stop by, perhaps with more questions, or more unnervingly, could it be Hannibal, drawn here by some unfathomable impulse? The thought sent a shiver of anticipation coursing through him. After the day he'd had, after Alana, every fiber of his being itched to claim Hannibal. To have Hannibal underneath him, Will's teeth in his neck, Will's cock buried in his ass. To leave absolutely no question about who Hannibal belonged to.

Will set his glass of whiskey, barely sipped, on the bookshelf and wiped cool droplets of condensation from his glass across his pants, leaving a damp streak on the fabric, and approached the door. The dogs' tails wagged with cautious optimism as he reached for the doorknob, the cool metal offering a stark contrast to the warmth of the house. He peered through the glass, expecting to find a familiar face, but the porch was empty, bathed in the soft glow of the evening light that cast long shadows across the wooden boards.

A flicker of confusion crossed Will's face as he opened the door, stepping out into the crisp air. The dogs rushed to the threshold, noses twitching, scanning for the source of their interest. Their behavior was a puzzle, the pieces not quite fitting together, leaving Will to wonder about the unseen forces at play just beyond his doorstep. The air around him felt charged, his instincts sharpening—a predator's innate warning that another predator lurked nearby, unseen yet palpably present.

Shattering the silence, Buster darted out into the darkness, barking at some lurking threat. Will's usually obedient dog charged with a frantic urgency that sliced through the night, vanishing into the dark woods. Instinct kicked in– *protect* . Will burst back inside and immediately grabbed his shotgun from its place by the entrance. He checked it swiftly, ensuring it was loaded and ready, then charged back out into the night, barely stopping to grab a coat to protect against the cold. Chasing after Buster, the sound of snow crunching underfoot faded as all of Will's focus was trained on his dog and scanning for threats. As he moved, his mind narrowed, reduced to the most basic instincts: track, defend, survive. Each step was a blend of calculated precision and raw, animalistic impulse. In no time at all, Will hit the woods, which seemed to close in around him, branches reaching like fingers in the moonlight.

Catching up to Buster, Will's eyes were immediately drawn to the blood staining his white fur. A visceral rage ignited within him, burning hotter with each second as adrenaline flooded his system, further heightening his senses. Will scooped Buster into his arms, the weight grounding him more firmly in survival mode. Without hesitation, Will turned and sprinted back towards his house, his mind singularly focused on safety and defense.

The house loomed into view, his boat on the sea, his safe place in the encroaching darkness. As Will secured the door behind him, the atmosphere inside his home morphed. Each dog accounted for and safe, his primal instincts seamlessly shifted from *protect and defend* to *hunt and kill*. His heartbeat, still steady and deliberate, pulsed with a commanding presence. With a quiet tug, Will pulled the chain of the lamp, plunging the room into darkness, leaving only the ghostly silver of moonlight filtering through the windows to illuminate the space. Time slowed as he stood silent in the center of his living room, a sentinel in his own domain.

The primal part of his brain, ancient and unyielding, recognized another predator in the vicinity, but knew it was no match for Will. With this realization, his senses heightened to an extraordinary degree. His hearing became acutely sharp, each subtle crack of a branch or a rustle of leaves outside registering as if amplified. His eyes, adjusted to the dim light, scanned the shadows with predatory precision.

The smell of the damp earth and the cold bite of the winter air filtered in through the slight cracks under the doors, bringing with it the scent trails of the outside world. Will's nostrils flared slightly as he processed these inputs, his mind mapping out the terrain around his home with a hunter's expertise.

His breathing was slow and controlled, each inhale and exhale a measured decision. This quiet steadiness was not the calm before a storm, but the focused assurance of a storm's eye–potent and inevitable. Will knew with a bone-deep certainty that he was the apex predator here. Whatever dared challenge him would find itself facing a force as relentless as nature itself.

In that moment, Will's existence was narrowed to the simple, brutal logic of the wild: he was the dominant creature, the alpha of his territory, ready and waiting for the interloper to make its next move. His entire being hummed with a dark anticipation, every fiber attuned to the imminent confrontation. This was not a man waiting in fear, but a predator poised in his element, ready to assert his supremacy.

On the edge of Will's periphery, a figure–nothing more than a shadow sharpened by moonlight and adrenaline–lunged through the window, shattering it; Will's instincts did not falter. He stood his ground, every sense acutely sharpened, tracking the trajectory of the incoming threat with predatory precision. His eyes missed no detail of the aggressor's form or movement.

His breathing remained even, controlled. Will allowed the intruder to close the distance, his own movements minimal but deliberate. He knew the exact moment to strike, his body responding with a natural, lethal grace that was beautiful in its efficiency.

With a swift, fluid motion, Will sidestepped the initial charge, his hands finding their way to the intruder's body with the certainty of a seasoned hunter. Each touch, each grasp was both an exploration and an assertion of control, his fingers mapping the contours of the mechanical suit barely registering the unnatural rigidity beneath his touch. His instincts focused solely on the kill, indifferent to the unnatural armor encasing his prey, calculating leverage and vulnerability.

Will's counterattack was a blur of motion, guided by an instinct that was both primal and honed by years of training on the force and with the FBI. His actions were not driven by panic but by a profound understanding of physical dynamics and human frailty. The dance was brutal, a choreography of survival where he was both the conductor and the lead performer.

Will's dominance over the encounter was swift and absolute. He maneuvered the intruder to the floor with a calculated thrust, pinning him with the full weight of his body. Will's fists found their target: the cold, hard surface of a metal bear mask that obscured the intruder's

face. Each punch was delivered with the precision and ferocity of a natural predator, the sound of metal clanging under the force of his blows echoing in the room like a war drum.

Pain did not register in Will's conscious mind; his instincts were wholly focused on the hunt, on neutralizing the threat that dared invade his territory. His breathing was steady, each exhale synchronized with the rhythmic striking of his fists. The instinct to protect himself and his home was all-consuming, obliterating any sense of mercy or hesitation that might normally temper his actions.

Beneath him, the intruder struggled weakly, the ineffectiveness of their attempts to fight back only spurring Will further. His senses were sharply attuned, each movement of the masked figure beneath him informing his next strike. The primal part of his brain took over completely, driving him to incapacitate, to dominate, to ensure that this threat could no longer harm him or his pack.

As Will's fists continued to rain down, his vision blurred, the adrenaline coursing through his veins painting the stark scene with hues of red and shadow. Suddenly, the face beneath the mask morphed, and for a heart-stopping moment, Will saw Hannibal's features where the intruder's should be. The hallucination didn't slow his assault; if anything, it intensified the ferocity of his blows. The sight of Hannibal under him, seemingly at his mercy, triggered a complex swirl of dominance and possessiveness that tangled with the raw aggression of the fight.

Even as he pummeled the metal mask, a primitive desire awakened within him, spurred on by the overwhelming sense of victory and control. It was a dark, consuming need that rose from the deepest parts of him, an instinct to mate driven by the same primitive forces that fueled his aggression. The juxtaposition of violence and this emergent desire was disorienting, yet it felt eerily fitting in the chaos of the moment.

Will's breaths grew heavier, his movements more deliberate as he pinned the intruder with an unyielding grip, ensuring there was no escape. The physical domination over the body beneath him, coupled with the hallucinatory vision of Hannibal's face, stirred a fierce joy within him. It was the triumph of the hunter over its prey, the apex predator securing not just a victory but claiming a prize in the most primal sense.

In this surreal blend of violence and desire, Will's instincts did not differentiate between the urge to destroy and the urge to possess; both drove him with equal force, compelling him to dominate completely, to own the moment and the man beneath him, whether foe or imagined lover.

As Will's relentless assault continued, a final, shattering blow knocked the bear mask from the intruder's face, clattering across the floor. Will's hallucination abruptly shattered with it, the fantasy of dominance over Hannibal evaporating into the stark, chilling reality of the moment. Beneath him lay not Hannibal, but Randall Tier, lifeless eyes staring up at him from behind the visage of a mechanized animal, the brutal finality of his demise laid bare.

Will stood slowly, his breathing heavy, his senses returning to the cold clarity of the real world. His hands were bloodied, knuckles raw and stinging, evidence of the violence he had wrought. Blood splattered his face and clothes, painting him as the victor in this savage

confrontation. He loomed over Randall's body, an imposing figure bathed in the dim light filtering through the broken window. The triumph was palpable, etched into every line of his stance, every pulse of his racing heart.

As he surveyed the scene, a sense of profound victory mixed with a wild, primal satisfaction surged through him. Will was the hunter, the predator who had claimed his territory and vanquished his challenger. The stark contrast between the fierce predator he had become in the heat of battle and the quiet, contemplative man he was in his everyday life was stark. In this moment, covered in the remnants of his confrontation, Will was every inch the dominant force he had felt compelled to unleash, a vivid, living testament to the raw power of instinctive survival and control.

As the immediate rush of battle subsided, the primal edge to Will's instincts dulled, yet did not vanish entirely. He stood over Randall Tier's body, breathing heavily, his senses still heightened but no longer screaming with the urgency of combat. There was a moment of quiet, almost reverent contemplation as he took in the scene before him—the physical closeness of the confrontation, the tactile reality of his victory.

Unlike the distanced act of firing a gun that had ended Garret Jacob Hobbs's life, this was personal. Will had felt every impact, every give of flesh under his fists, the resistance of bone against his blows. It was visceral, intimate in a way that firing a bullet could never be. The metallic scent of blood filled his nostrils, a stark reminder of the life he had just extinguished with his own hands.

There was no guilt this time, no remorse or second-guessing that had accompanied his previous kill. Instead, there was a dark thrill, a deep, intoxicating satisfaction that coursed through him. It was a euphoria born not of escape from danger, but of dominance asserted and proved in the most elemental way possible.

Will allowed himself a moment to revel in this feeling, to savor the potent sense of control and power that still hummed through his veins. This kill had affirmed something within him, a dark harmony with his own nature that he had long denied but could no longer ignore. It was a profound acknowledgment of his own capacity for violence—a capacity that felt right and fitting, not as an aberration but as an integral part of who he was.

As Will stood in the dimly lit room, his pulse still thrumming with the adrenaline of the kill, his mind inevitably drifted to Hannibal. It was clear as the cold night air that Hannibal had orchestrated this encounter. Of course Hannibal would have known where Randall Tier was, and crucially, how to point him in Will's direction without ever seeming involved. Hannibal's mastery of manipulation meant he could sculpt reality with the slightest touch, and in this case, his fingers had danced over chaos itself to send Tier to Will's doorstep.

Will felt a surge of dark exhilaration at the thought. Hannibal had set the stage for this deadly ballet, knowing well that Will would not only survive but emerge victorious. It was a test, a gift, or perhaps both—a way for Hannibal to see Will's primal nature unfurl in full, violent display. And Will had not disappointed.

The realization that he had effectively hunted on Hannibal's behalf ignited a primitive satisfaction within him, a raw, almost territorial pride. He had proven himself not just

capable, but exemplary in the savage task set before him. It was an affirmation of his strength, his ruthlessness, and his place at Hannibal's side.

Now, with the heat of battle cooling in his veins, practical considerations took over. Will knew he needed to clean up, to erase any trace of the night's violence from his home. He would dispose of any evidence, meticulously ensuring nothing could lead back to him. Then, with a cold efficiency, he planned to transport Randall Tier's body to Hannibal's—his kill offered as a testament to his lethal prowess, a tribute to the dark bond they shared.

The task ahead would be methodical, a ritual cleansing of the scene that mirrored the clarity now found in his own mind. With each step of preparation, Will felt aligned with Hannibal's design, woven into the fabric of their shared narrative of blood and shadows. Tonight, he had not just defended his life; he had cemented his place in Hannibal's world, reveling in the deep, undeniable connection that bound them together in ways no one else could ever comprehend.

Will dragged Tier's lifeless body over the threshold of Hannibal's home, the heavy door swinging open with ease. Hannibal never locked his doors; a testament to his confidence—or perhaps arrogance—as the most formidable predator. Will couldn't help but wonder about Hannibal's reaction to finding Tier displayed on his dining room table. Would Hannibal still see himself as the apex predator once he saw the aftermath of Will hunting and killing?

Will hefted Randall's body onto the table with a grunt. It seemed the most theatrical and fitting place for such a display, an altar of sorts where the macabre fit seamlessly with the aesthetic Hannibal cherished. As he positioned Randall's limbs, setting the stage for Hannibal's return, Will's thoughts drifted to the nature of their relationship, the interplay of power and submission, hunter and prey.

He knew Hannibal wouldn't be far–he would be waiting to see the results of his test. The house held a palpable anticipation, as if even the walls were waiting for their master's return. Will settled into an ornate chair, his eyes on the door, his heart rate still low, even after the exertion and adrenaline of the kill.

The moment Hannibal stepped into the room, the air shifted subtly. To an untrained eye, his expression was unreadable, composed, but Will saw the flicker of relief that Will was unharmed, quickly masked by a surge of pride and satisfaction. Hannibal's gaze lingered on Randall's body, taking in the sight with an appreciative eye.

"Did you kill him with your hands?" Hannibal's voice was low, filled with a curiosity that bordered on reverence.

"It was…intimate," Will replied, his voice steady, but underneath, a torrent of emotions swirled—pride, defiance, a hint of challenge.

"It deserves intimacy," Hannibal agreed, stepping closer to inspect the body more thoroughly, his fingers almost caressingly brushing against Randall's cold cheek.

Hannibal's tone remained smooth, a dark hunger threading through his words as he pierced the growing tension. “Tell me about it, Will. How did it make you feel?”

Will's eyebrow arched, amusement tugging at the corners of his mouth despite the charged atmosphere. “That’s some lazy psychiatry, Doctor,” he retorted, his voice steeped in sarcasm, challenging Hannibal's inquiry without yielding an inch. Yet, Hannibal’s eyes didn't waver, dissecting Will's deflections with a gaze that seemed to peel back layers, seeking more than just spoken words.

There was a flash of knowing intuition in Hannibal’s eyes, an exhibit of his natural ability to see through Will’s facade. Leaning forward, Hannibal's presence closed in, his whisper almost conspiratorial. “Did you imagine it was me instead?”

Will nodded, and recounted the experience of killing Randall, noting each shift in Hannibal's expression as the tale unfolded. When he described the hallucination—imagining it was Hannibal beneath him, feeling each impact of his hands—Hannibal’s features sharpened into a ravenous, almost predatory look. "A beautiful design," Hannibal murmured, each syllable laced with dark admiration and a hint of longing, his tone resonating with the depth of his intrigue and desire. “I wish I could have watched you in all your glory.”

"I could give you a demonstration," Will's voice dropped to a murmur, the tug of his instincts undeniable, urging him to close the distance between them. Inches away, their breaths intertwined, a silent exchange of unvoiced tensions. Will could feel the magnetic pull, a force as primal as it was irresistible. Hannibal’s breath hitched as Will came closer, his face alight with desire.

"My darling boy… yes," he intoned back, his voice threaded with a mix of hunger and surrender.

Will’s hands rose with a slow, deliberate grace, encircling Hannibal’s throat in a grip that was both tender and commanding. As he confessed, “I’ve thought about this… a lot,” his whispered voice was husky with desire, his instincts purring at the position of his hands. “It’s almost surreal, holding your life in my hands. To think, the Chesapeake Ripper allowing me this… It's intoxicating, Hannibal. You are intoxicating.”

The gradual increase in pressure drew a look of ecstasy on Hannibal’s face as his head tilted back. His eyes, glazed and half-lidded, locked onto Will’s with unguarded vulnerability. The physical assertion of control sent a thrilling charge through Will, igniting his arousal. Leaning in, his lips barely grazed Hannibal’s cheek as he whispered, “You look good like this… completely at my mercy. Like you belong to me.”

A stifled moan escaped Hannibal, muffled by Will’s grip. "I know you’ve thought about this moment. Does it live up to your expectations?" Will’s voice was a seductive whisper, seeking confirmation. Hannibal made a small, choked sound, an attempt at nodding hindered by the unyielding hands around his throat. Will's body pressed forward, the unmistakable hardness of his desire grinding against the prominent bulge in Hannibal's slacks. The raw physicality of their interaction stripped away any remaining pretense, laying bare the primal aspects of their connection.

Will felt the instinct to fuck and claim surge, and he allowed himself surrender to his baser nature. Making deliberate eye contact with Hannibal, Will stepped back and commanded, “Suit. Off. Now.” One eyebrow quirked up at Hannibal’s bewilderment on his face, a silent scramble for bearings that momentarily stripped the composure from the psychiatrist’s expression. Will allowed the corners of his mouth to twitch up in enjoyment of this rare victory in unsettling Hannibal’s veneer.

If one single command has that expression on your face, darlin’, just you wait.

Hannibal hesitated, a visible shudder coursing through him as he processed Will's command. For a moment, he seemed rooted to the spot, his usual grace overshadowed by the audacity of the demand. Then, shaking off the paralysis, he set about removing his entire suit with a deliberateness that belied his initial shock. Will swallowed hard at the sight, his desire tangible as he observed Hannibal complying with his orders. Each article of clothing that hit the floor marked Hannibal’s further surrender to him.

Will swallowed a moan at the sight of Hannibal clad only in tight black briefs that clung to him like a second skin. Hannibal’s chest, broad and muscular, was adorned with a dusting of silvery blonde hair that shimmered under the soft lighting, echoing the subtle hue atop his head. Will’s gaze traveled down to the pronounced bulge, clearly outlined and impossible to ignore. The sight ignited a raw hunger in Will, a burning need that pooled heavily in his groin.

“Hannibal,” Will groaned, lust thickening his voice as he devoured the sight before him. With a predatory growl, he commanded, “Turn around, hands on the table.” Hannibal’s eyes widened, a flare of desire overtaking his features as he obediently turned and bent gracefully over the table.

The rush that surged through Will was dizzying: Hannibal, presented submissively, palms pressed flat against the surface, offered an irresistible tableau against the macabre backdrop of Tier’s body. Will’s feet carried him forward, and he dropped to his knees behind Hannibal, hands reaching out to grasp the hips presented to him.

The briefs, stretched taut over Hannibal’s firm ass, were an invitation Will couldn’t resist. He caressed the fabric, tracing the contours of Hannibal’s buttocks with deliberate strokes. The smooth silk warmed under his touch, each glide of his fingers sending shivers of anticipation through both of them. The friction of fabric against skin, the subtle give of the material as he pressed deeper, conjured vivid images of his hands gliding slickly into Hannibal’s bare flesh.

“ *Fuck* , baby.”

In one fluid motion, Will tore the briefs down Hannibal’s legs, driven by a carnal urgency. Leaning forward, he inhaled deeply, savoring the intoxicating mix of Hannibal’s natural scent overlaid with the rich undertones of leather and sandalwood, accented by a tantalizing hint of citrus. Below that, the heady, salty musk of Hannibal’s arousal filled his senses, stirring a primal hunger deep within him.

Driven by raw, instinctual need, Will pressed his lips to the exposed flesh of Hannibal’s ass and thighs, alternating between soft, teasing kisses and forceful, greedy sucks that left the

skin marked with blooming shades of red and purple. His hands, bold and possessive, roamed over Hannibal's tightened muscles, squeezing the firm flesh and reveling in its resilience. Will's fingertips danced provocatively across Hannibal's perineum, teasingly brushing against his swelling balls, each contact sending jolts of pleasure through both men.

With each kiss and touch, Will's desire surged. He trailed his nose up the length of Hannibal's spine, drawing in the scent of him, before planting a possessive kiss at the base. This wasn't just a kiss; it was a declaration, marking Hannibal with the intimate imprint of his lips. Will's breath was hot against Hannibal's skin, his whispered exhalations sending shivers through Hannibal's body as he prepared him for what was to come.

"Tell me," Will whispered huskily, his breath hot against Hannibal's skin as he spread him open, exposing the vulnerability beneath his commanding touch. "How have you imagined killing me?" His voice, a provocative murmur, sent vibrations through Hannibal's skin, a sinister yet arousing proposition.

He accentuated his inquiry with a sharp bite into the soft flesh of Hannibal's ass, each tooth imprint a mark of his dominance and a reminder of their lethal dance. Hannibal's response was visceral—a tense arch of his back and a guttural moan that resonated with pain and pleasure, the sound raw and primal. His body shuddered under the sting, the sensation unlocking a torrent of dark desires that surged through his veins.

The bite drew a deeper, darker arousal from Hannibal, his breath hitching as the edge of pain blurred into a tantalizing thrill. His head tilted back in surrender, exposing the vulnerable stretch of his throat, a silent plea mingled with the moan that slipped from his parted lips. The mix of pain and pleasure, the dangerous dance of their desires, was intoxicating, pushing them both closer to the brink of a primal breakdown.

Before Hannibal could regain his bearings, Will attacked with a ferocious hunger. His tongue was relentless, delving deep, swirling around Hannibal's rim with ravenous intent. He savored each quiver of flesh under his mouth, the tangy taste of sweat mixed with the more intimate flavors that only Hannibal could provide. Each deliberate lick sent shockwaves through Hannibal, drawing out throaty, involuntary whimpers that fueled Will's dark desire.

Will had anticipated pleasure from their closeness, but the raw, animalistic intensity of the act was staggering. His world narrowed to the visceral responses he elicited from Hannibal—each gasp, each shudder was a direct testament to his prowess. There was no space for thought, only the overwhelming drive to consume and dominate the man beneath him, to taste every hidden part, every reaction that he could pull from those trembling lips.

As Hannibal's body contorted to look back at the source of his pleasure, Will paused to look up, his gaze locking with Hannibal's. The brief connection was electric, charged with raw need and undeniable surrender. Sensing Hannibal's desire mounting, Will deliberately withdrew his fingers, only to replace them with gentle but insistent pressure from his thumbs. He massaged Hannibal's exposed rim, coaxing out a series of desperate, muffled whimpers. Each touch was calculated, soothing yet assertive, as Will's low, calming murmurs mingled with the sounds of Hannibal's restrained thrashing.

Resting a firm thumb against the twitching entrance, Will's voice carried a commanding undercurrent, a stark reminder of his dominance. "I asked you a question," he reiterated, the control in his voice unmistakable.

Hannibal's response began shakily, "The first time I thought about k-killing you was after–" His words were abruptly cut off by a sharp cry as Will, unsatisfied with the pace, drew a long, deliberate lick across the sensitive flesh, forcing Hannibal to catch his breath in sharp, ragged gasps.

Digging his nails into the tender flesh of Hannibal's thighs, Will elicited a sharp hiss from the depths of Hannibal's throat. "I didn't tell you to stop," Will's growl vibrated with primal authority, resonating deeply within the charged air. Hannibal, visibly shaken, quickly realigned his gaze with Will's, a flash of indignation flaring within his eyes, now alight with a dangerous spark. Firm and unyielding, Will issued a stern command, "Start over," his voice brooking no argument as he held Hannibal open, the vulnerability stark against his assertive touch.

Hannibal, visibly strained, reoriented himself, his breath catching in a pained grunt as he attempted to voice his dark musings. "I t-thought—thought about— *Will* —slitting y-your th-throat," he stammered, his breaths ragged and uneven, his voice wavering as Will's mouth descended hungrily back to his exposed flesh. Will reveled in the dark confession, his thumbs prying Hannibal's entrance wider, each motion an invitation for deeper exploration.

With deliberate sensuality, Will's tongue pressed flat against the pulsing rim, enveloping it with his lips to suck fervently, eliciting a deep, guttural groan that vibrated through Hannibal's core. He intensified his assault with slow, deliberate licks, diving deeper to probe the quivering inner walls, each stroke sending shivers of pleasure coursing through Hannibal's body.

"It w-would h-h-have been—Will," Hannibal's attempt at speech faltered into moans, his coherence unraveling under Will's expert touch. Will, savoring his dominion over Hannibal, slowly withdrew his tongue, leaving a lingering sensation that teased the brink of unbearable need.

"What would it have been, darlin'?" Will murmured, his voice a sultry echo of command and seduction that filled the charged silence. As he waited for Hannibal to compose himself enough to respond, Will deftly removed a sachet of lube–one of several he had the forethought to bring–opened it, and coated his fingers.

Hannibal's response was shaky, his body tensed in anticipation, the muscles of his thighs quivering as he fought for words. "It would have been… p-poetic," he finally gasped, the admission laced with a mixture of agony and ecstasy, revealing the twisted depth of his affection and dark intent.

"Good boy," Will's voice rumbled deeply, the raw approval vibrating through the tense air. Hannibal's reaction was electric—a sharp intake of breath followed by a seductive arching of his back, his body writhing under the weight of such simple, yet potent, praise. The sight of the formidable Chesapeake Ripper, now quivering with need, fueled a delicious thrill within Will, affirming his control.

Will, driven by this rush, slid a finger alongside his teasing tongue into Hannibal, exploring deeper. Hannibal's reaction was explosive, his body thrusting back eagerly against Will's penetrating digit, his moan a ragged, desperate plea: "More, *please* Will."

With a wicked grin, Will kissed Hannibal's heated, flushed skin softly. "Be patient, baby," he murmured, his voice a low, teasing drawl. "I'm taking my time." His fingers, slick and determined, danced intricately, stretching and caressing the sensitive, trembling walls of Hannibal's entrance. Will's finger slid in and out with meticulous care, prepping Hannibal thoroughly, delighting in the way each deliberate motion drew small, needy sounds from beneath him.

"Will, I'm ready," Hannibal gasped out, the words raw and stripped of his usual linguistic flourish.

Will's low chuckle resonated in the charged air, a sound of dark amusement at Hannibal's raw, unfiltered pleas. The eloquent man, usually shrouded in complex layers of dialogue, now lay stripped of all pretense, voicing primitive needs that vibrated with stark desire. "It's intoxicating," Will purred, the timbre of his voice thick with arousal, "to hear you so desperate, so utterly needy."

His fingers traced a deliberate path downward, pausing to press firmly against Hannibal's perineum. The touch elicited a sharp, guttural gasp from Hannibal, a sound so charged with urgency that it echoed off the walls, a testament to Will's skilled provocation. Hannibal's usual composure was shattered, replaced by an open, aching need that was palpable in the air.

"Beg for it," Will commanded, his voice a seductive mix of playfulness and authority. He hovered just above Hannibal, his gaze intense as he watched every quiver of Hannibal's body, every plea etched into his features. "Tell me how much you need me inside you," Will demanded, his words dripping with the promise of fulfillment yet withholding, pushing Hannibal to the brink of desperation.

Hannibal, overwhelmed by the mix of pleasure and anticipation, could only manage a ragged, "Please, Will, please." His voice broke with the raw edge of his desire, each word a tether pulling him closer to the edge of surrender. Will's smirk widened, satisfied with the control he wielded, as he savored the unraveling of the man beneath him.

"Very good," Will murmured, his voice thick with approval. He carefully introduced a second finger alongside the first, both curling to stroke Hannibal's sensitive nerves. His tongue resumed its deliberate work, lapping at Hannibal's rim with focused intent. Each movement was slow and calculated, coaxing deeper, more primal sounds from Hannibal. Meanwhile, Will's other hand clamped around Hannibal's hip, his fingers digging in firmly, promising to leave bruises—a testament to the intensity of their shared moment.

Will was intoxicated by every sound Hannibal made—the scrape of his fingernails against the tabletop, the raw, unfiltered moans spilling from his lips, and the eager, frantic movements of his hips pressing back onto Will's tongue. Hannibal, in a futile attempt to restrain his gasps, bit off the ends of his moans, pressing a hand firmly against his mouth. His knuckles turned white as he shoved his fingers deeper into his mouth, struggling to stay quiet under the onslaught of sensation.

“Come on, baby, I wanna hear you,” Will encouraged, his voice a husky whisper over the slick sounds of their encounter. He wanted to capture and savor every escaping moan, to cherish the sounds of Hannibal unraveled by pleasure.

Will’s fingers moved with unrelenting precision, stretching and probing Hannibal’s depths. His tongue flicked and swirled, alternating between teasing licks and firm, insistent strokes. He pressed his face deeper, breathing in the musky scent of Hannibal’s arousal, his own cock throbbing with anticipation. The taste of Hannibal on his tongue was intoxicating, a heady mix of salt and desire that fueled his relentless assault.

“I’m going to take my time with you, open you up nice and slow,” he murmured against the sensitive skin, his breath hot. His fingers circled, pressed, prepared, promising that soon, he’d claim not just Hannibal’s ass but worship every inch of him with a reverent intensity that would leave no doubt about his possessive desire.

“I know that wasn’t the only time you thought about killing me.” Will’s words were both an inquisition and an enticement, his tone a blend of curiosity and command. He paused to suck gently at the tender flesh before him, each pull drawing a deeper shade of red to the surface. Then, almost playfully, he delivered a light smack to Hannibal’s ass, the sound sharp in the otherwise quiet room. It was an encouraging prompt, a clear signal for Hannibal to continue. His fingers resumed their meticulous work, pressing and retreating in a rhythm that matched the rise and fall of Hannibal’s breaths, coaxing him to reveal more than just physical surrender. “When else?”

Hannibal’s voice broke, rough and laden with desperation, his pleas tinged with a fervor that pierced the charged air between them. “Please, Will, let me come. I need it—need you. Fuck me, just… please.” His words tumbled out, breathless and urgent. “Give me your cock, Will. I want to feel you inside me, owning me, claiming me. Make me yours.”

The raw, naked need in Hannibal’s voice, the open yearning to be claimed so completely, sent a surge of dominance through Will, his body responding instinctively to the invitation laid out so vulnerably. Will’s eyes darkened, his pulse quickened at the sheer intensity of Hannibal’s submission.

Will’s gaze hardened, the edges of his lips twitching slightly, not in amusement, but as a prelude to reassertion of his control. “You seem to forget,” Will’s voice dropped, a dark velvet rumble, “who’s in charge here.” His hand landed sharply across Hannibal’s ass, the sound crackling through the air like a whip, reinforcing his dominance. “I decide when, and how, and you will answer my questions first.” His fingers tightened, not just threatening but promising further dominance. “Be good, Hannibal, and maybe then I’ll give you what you want.”

Hannibal’s response was visceral, a choked moan slipping from his lips, his body arching into the sting with masochistic craving. Will observed the desperation bloom further in Hannibal, his eyes glinting with wicked pleasure. With a deliberate slow stroke, he grazed Hannibal’s prostate, extracting a shuddering gasp from him. Then, as quickly as he had intensified the touch, he withdrew slightly, his movements slowing to a maddeningly gentle pace as he traced light circles around Hannibal’s rim. Leaning close, his breath ghosting over the shell of

Hannibal's ear, Will's voice was both a taunt and a promise, "Don't you want to be my good boy?"

Will's hands continued their skilled exploration, fingers tracing the trembling muscles, amplifying the tension, the anticipation. He squeezed the firm flesh of Hannibal's buttocks, pulling them apart to expose him further, to delve deeper. Hannibal's hole fluttered, its edges flushed a deep pink, swollen from Will's relentless attention. It looked utterly delectable, irresistibly inviting—a testament to the thoroughness of his earlier administrations. The sight of it, so vulnerable and responsive, was enough to make Will's mouth water.

The potent mix of Hannibal's heady arousal and the tang of exertion filled the air, intoxicating Will with the power he wielded over this man who was usually so composed, so in control. The sounds of Hannibal's ragged breathing and muffled pleas were like music, heightening Will's own arousal, driving him to bring them both to the brink.

Having Hannibal so utterly lost in the sensations Will evoked, so completely at his mercy, was an overwhelming experience. Will felt a powerful urge to reach down and relieve the pressure building in his groin. The idea of stroking himself, of intensifying their shared ecstasy by pleasuring himself to the rhythm of Hannibal's own desperate thrusts, was tantalizing, but he resisted with an ironclad will. There would be time for that later.

"Will, I *can't* ," Hannibal gasped out after a few moments, his voice strained with the effort of maintaining coherence under the onslaught of sensations.

"Yes you can, I know you can." Will coaxed, his voice a mixture of command and reassurance as his hand soothingly rubbed across the colorful bruises blooming on Hannibal's skin, his touch gentle yet firm. "Come on, darlin'," he urged, his tone dipped in affection and challenge, compelling Hannibal to endure, to revel in the exquisite torture of prolonged pleasure.

"I—I thought about g-gutting you," Hannibal stuttered, each word punctuated by a sharp intake of breath as Will's fingers resumed their deep thrusting. Hannibal's hips began to rock fervently, seeking more of Will's touch, a silent plea for deeper contact. Observing this, Will's hand found Hannibal's cock, wrapping around it with a firm but controlled grip. Each stroke was tantalizing, designed to stoke Hannibal's fire without granting the release he sought.

A desperate whine escaped Hannibal as Will's fingers encircled him, but he quickly gathered himself to respond. Watching Hannibal struggle to maintain composure, Will couldn't help but admire how perfectly obedient he was being. "The intimacy of it—how it would feel to open you up," Hannibal managed to continue, his voice trailing off into a wail on the last word, overwhelmed by the blend of sharp pleasure and the weight of his own confessions.

"I knew you could do it, darlin', good job," Will praised. Hannibal's body trembled, his muscles taut and quivering under Will's ministrations–telltale signs of an impending climax. His breath came in ragged gasps, each exhale a testament to the pleasure coursing through him. The tension in his body built to a fever pitch, his hips bucking wildly as he rode the edge of ecstasy.

Will's grip tightened on Hannibal's hip, his fingers leaving deep, red marks against the pale skin. He reveled in the control he held, the power to bring Hannibal to the brink and pull him back again. With a final, deliberate curl of his fingers and a firm suck on Hannibal's rim, he pushed Hannibal over the edge, eliciting a guttural, primal cry that echoed through the room.

"Good boy," Will growled, his voice rough with desire. "Let me hear you. Let me hear how good it feels."

Hannibal's response was immediate and visceral, a strangled cry of pure ecstasy ripped from his throat. His entire body shuddered with the force of his orgasm, muscles trembling and clenching around Will's fingers. The raw, unfiltered sounds of his pleasure filled the room, a symphony of desperate whimpers and deep, guttural groans. His back arched, head thrown back, mouth open in a silent scream as the waves of pleasure crashed over him, leaving him panting and breathless.

Will took a moment to admire the flushed and heaving form in front of him, thrilled to have reduced Hannibal to this. Hannibal's body was a vision of debauched beauty, skin slick with sweat, every muscle taut and trembling from the intensity of his release. His chest heaved with ragged breaths, and his eyes, half-lidded and glazed with pleasure, locked onto Will's with a smoldering intensity.

Without warning, Hannibal snarled and whipped around, pushing Will back towards the wall, and dropping to his knees. Animalistic noises erupted from him—low growls and ragged snarls—as his hands frantically grappled with Will's belt buckle. Despite his urgency, his movements were too frantic, fingers slipping and fumbling, barely managing to loosen the belt.

Hannibal's desperation was palpable, his need to reciprocate and claim Will as his own driving him to near madness. Finally, with a frustrated growl, he tore the belt free, yanking Will's pants down and freeing his aching cock. Hannibal wasted no time, his mouth descending with a hunger that bordered on feral. The heat and wetness of his mouth engulfed Will, and the sensation was nothing short of electrifying.

Will's hands flew to Hannibal's head, tangling in his hair, guiding and encouraging the frantic movements. Hannibal's mouth worked with a fervor, lips and tongue moving in a relentless rhythm that sent jolts of pleasure coursing through Will's body. The sounds of their raw, unrestrained desire filled the room, a symphony of moans, groans, and the wet, slick noises of Hannibal's mouth on Will's cock.

Hannibal's hands roamed over Will's thighs, squeezing and kneading the firm muscles, his nails leaving red trails in their wake. His desperation to taste every inch of Will, to claim him as thoroughly as he had been claimed, was evident in every fervent motion. He looked up, eyes blazing with lust and adoration, locking onto Will's as he took him deeper, the sheer intensity of the connection sending Will spiraling further into their shared abyss of desire. The firm suction and precise swirl of his tongue drew a deep, guttural groan from his throat as Will involuntarily pushed deeper into the consuming warmth. "That's it, good boy."

At Will's praise, Hannibal's response was instantaneous and visceral; his eyelashes fluttered, and a moan vibrated up his throat, sending an electric jolt through Will's cock, down into his

balls. Will's vision momentarily blurred, overwhelmed by the pleasure coursing through him. The sight of Hannibal like this—so utterly surrendered and exquisite—struck a chord within Will. *He looks so pretty like this,* Will thought, a part of him marveling at how perfectly Hannibal embodied this role of submission, as if he were born for it. *Maybe he was, maybe this is what he needs, too.*

Unable to look away, Will fought the urge to slump against the wall, entranced by the sight of Hannibal's lips, wet and swollen from their fervent work. The obscene sounds of Hannibal's mouth enveloping his cock—the slick slurping and the soft gagging as Will thrust deeper—echoed through the room, a provocative score to their carnal play. Hannibal's eyes, glassy and wide with lustful submission, remained locked on Will's, a clear display of his complete surrender. Each bob of his head and swirl of his tongue sent ripples of pleasure shooting through Will, intensifying the heat pooling in his groin. The raw, unabashed need in Hannibal's gaze, coupled with the fervor of his mouth's movements, stoked a primal fire within Will, urging him to dominate and claim even more fiercely.

Suddenly, Hannibal's mouth withdrew, and Will's skin tingled with the abrupt lack of warmth. Before Will could voice his displeasure, Hannibal's tongue returned, tracing a lascivious path across the sensitive tip of Will's cock, lapping up the pearlescent beads of pre-come with obscene relish. The focused, almost reverent attention sent a visceral shudder through Will's frame, a primal reaction to such explicit worship.

Noticing Hannibal's hips grinding subtly against his shin—a silent, desperate bid for his own release—Will's dominance flared. "No, darlin', stop that," he commanded, his voice thick with authority. He punctuated his command with a ruthless thrust, burying himself deep into Hannibal's mouth, forcing a muffled groan from the depths of Hannibal's throat.

Hannibal froze, the effort to halt his own pleasure etching lines of tension across his body. As Hannibal's lips closed around him again, Will's grip tightened on the back of Hannibal's head, his fingers weaving through Hannibal's hair to hold him firmly in place. With deliberate cruelty, Will thrust forward, relentlessly pushing the boundaries of Hannibal's endurance, each deep invasion testing Hannibal's ability to suppress his gag reflex.

Hannibal's eyes, heavy with lust and surrender, clung to Will's, mirroring every shade of pleasure painted across his face as Will pressed deeper, unyielding, until Hannibal's nose was buried in the coarse hair at his base. The raw, intimate pressure made Will groan—a throaty, carnal sound. "Fuck, that's it. You take me so well, good boy," he rasped, each syllable dripping with lascivious praise, celebrating the perfect tightness enveloping him. Will basked in the exquisite sensation of Hannibal's throat constricting around him, his words a provocative blend of command and gratification, acknowledging Hannibal's complete capitulation.

Tears pooled in Hannibal's eyes—sparked by the intensity of Will's thrusts or the profound resonance of his words, it was hard to tell. "Look at you, so fucking beautiful," Will groaned lowly, his voice thick with desire as he wiped away the tears with a tenderness that belied the firmness of his grip. His other hand remained ruthlessly at the back of Hannibal's head, keeping him firmly in place, his cock buried deep. "Just like that, stay right there on me," he

commanded, his tone blending possessiveness with an undercurrent of deep care, ensuring Hannibal felt every inch and every word.

Momentarily easing his hold, Will allowed Hannibal a brief respite, only to be captivated by the sight of saliva connecting the tip of his cock to Hannibal's lips—a lewd, perfect string that sent a rush of primal heat through his veins. Overwhelmed by a fierce need to possess, Will swiftly sank to his knees, pulling Hannibal into a ravenous kiss. Their lips clashed with wild intensity, Will tasting himself on Hannibal's tongue, a raw, explicit claim etched into their heated melding. The filthy, delicious flavor of his own arousal on Hannibal's lips was exquisite.

Will tore off his clothes with a ferocity born of raw desire, his body crashing against Hannibal's with a thud that echoed through the room. The clash of their naked flesh sparked an electric frenzy, their heated skin melding in a dance of slick, urgent need. As they devoured each other's mouths, the grinding of their bodies against each other was sinfully tactile, every slide and press a testament to their savage hunger.

"I'm going to fuck you now," Will growled into Hannibal's mouth, his voice rough with lust as he pinned Hannibal beneath him, seeking any flicker of reluctance in his eyes.

Hannibal arched up against him, moaning deeply, his voice laden with desperation. "Yes, Will, fuck me," he begged, his body writhing with want.

"You beg so well," Will praised huskily, his eyes darkening with dominance. He snatched another sachet of lube from his pants beside them, his movements swift and sure. Tearing it open with his teeth, he slicked his throbbing erection, the sound of the lube squelching as erotic as the anticipation in Hannibal's gaze.

Pausing to admire Hannibal sprawled before him—hair wild, lips swollen, cheeks flushed from arousal—Will was struck by an overwhelming sense of possession. Hannibal, laid bare and waiting, his legs invitingly open, presented a vision of decadent submission that Will couldn't resist. This beautiful, formidable creature was utterly his, surrendered for the taking.

"You're beautiful," Will murmured, voicing his thoughts with a soft caress, heavy with possessiveness as if each word staked his claim on Hannibal. He lavished the cool lube on Hannibal's eager entrance, his fingers mingling it with the lingering warmth of his prior caresses. Their eyes locked, electric with unspoken promises, as Will positioned himself. The tip of his cock pressed against Hannibal's entrance, the mere contact eliciting deep, resonant moans that vibrated through the charged air between them.

Will paused, savoring the precipice of desire. The weight of their combined anticipation, built from hours of teasing and denial, hung palpably in the air. Hannibal's desperate whimpers begged for release, his body tensed and ready.

In a breath, Will bridged the gap with a forceful thrust, sheathing himself deep within Hannibal. The raw intensity of their connection stripped everything away, leaving only the pulse of their interlocked rhythms. Hannibal gasped, a sound caught between shock and sublime pleasure, as Will's movements became an intricate dance of control and surrender. Their bodies moved in sync, each thrust deepening the bond that pulsed with primal energy.

Underneath him, Hannibal's face twisted into an expression of ecstatic torment, his mouth agape in a silent scream before a guttural moan tore from his throat. "Will, you're…" His words dissolved into moans, each sound a testament to the overwhelming pleasure Will wrung from him.

Enveloped in the scorching, tight clasp of Hannibal, Will felt a possessive fire roar through him. It was more than a physical union; it was a claim, a primal assertion of ownership that vibrated through his very core. "Mine," he growled into the tender flesh of Hannibal's neck, each syllable a fervent declaration.

Hannibal's response was immediate—his head thrashing back, eyes glazed, voice breaking as he gasped, "Yours." His submission wasn't just spoken; it pulsed through their connected bodies, every tremble and sigh weaving a bond so deep it was tangible. Will revelled in this affirmation, the words resonating like a hallowed promise, fueling a surge of triumph that intensified the raw connection between them.

"Darling," Hannibal's voice broke through, strained with desperate need. "Move, now." His face briefly twisted into a snarl, the wild, predatory Ripper surfacing in a flash of dark desire.

"Next time, beg for it," Will growled, a playful smirk tugging at his lips. He withdrew slowly, only to slam back into Hannibal with a savage thrust that echoed his command. Each brutal drive set a relentless rhythm, coaxing guttural moans from Hannibal, who fought to stifle the escalating sounds of his pleasure. The moment Will targeted Hannibal's prostate, the pitch of his cries soared, sharp and desperate. He hoisted Hannibal's legs onto his shoulders, granting himself deeper penetration, and intensified his assault on that exquisitely sensitive spot.

Driven by primal need, Hannibal's hand darted toward his own cock, seeking relief. Will's hand snapped out, catching Hannibal's wrist with iron strength. "You want something, darling? Ask me—nicely." His tone was both commanding and teasing, his thrusts deliberately slowing, pulling desperate whines from Hannibal's lips.

"Please, Will," Hannibal panted, his voice ragged with raw need, "touch me… I need to feel you."

A dark gleam of satisfaction flickered in Will's eyes as he resumed his powerful thrusts. "That's it. Just like that," he murmured huskily, sealing his words with a possessive kiss on Hannibal's forehead. His hand encircled Hannibal's arousal, the urgent grip promising exquisite release. The feel of Hannibal, hard and throbbing in his grasp, sent a jolt of arousal through Will, potent and irresistible.

Will's grip tightened, his control absolute. He was determined to push Hannibal to the brink, to savor every shudder and cry. As he stroked, Hannibal's body responded explosively, his pleas filling the room.

"Please, Will, let me come," Hannibal choked out, his voice thick with lust. "I need to come with you inside me."

"Yeah, baby, come for me," Will's voice rumbled deep and authoritative, resonating through the thick air of the room. His thrusts deepened, each one meticulously aimed to drive

Hannibal over the precipice of ecstasy. Every forceful penetration was crafted to coax out Hannibal's deepest surrender, the deliberate pace pushing him to the brink.

Hannibal's climax built as his body tensed to an almost unbearable degree, muscles vibrating with impending release. A guttural sob tore from his lips—a raw, primal sound so contrary to his usual refined demeanor—before he shattered. Tears streamed down his cheeks, catching the low light, each one a shimmering testament to his breakdown. With a tender ferocity, Will leaned down to capture the tears with his lips, tasting the salty trail, each drop blending pain with pleasure.

Will's rhythm intensified, each thrust more erratic than the last, driven by a growing urgency. He growled deeply, a sound laced with possession, as he drove himself fully into Hannibal. His teeth sank into the flesh of Hannibal's shoulder, the bite a fierce mark of ownership that stifled Hannibal's cries. The intense pressure muted the world around them as Will's climax surged, overwhelming him with a potent rush.

The response from Hannibal was instant; a profound, resonant moan vibrated against Will's lips, a mirrored echo of his own release. This total capitulation under Will's dominant bite sent a thrill of satisfaction coursing through him, reminding him vividly of their first encounter where the bite alone had pushed Hannibal to a spontaneous climax. This profound symmetry—a stark realization of their mutual intensity—anchored the moment as Will thought, *we are just alike.*

In the aftermath, Will's breaths came in heavy gusts, his body still shuddering with the aftershocks of release. He remained draped over Hannibal, the weight of his body pressing down in a silent claim of ownership, their sweat-slicked skin sticking together in the quiet aftermath of their storm.

Will nuzzled at Hannibal's neck, breathing in deeply the mingled scents of salt, musk, and the faint traces of their earlier exertions. His movements were gentle now, a stark contrast to the fervor of moments ago. As their breathing slowed, the room's stillness enveloped them, punctuated only by the distant sound of their synchronized heartbeats.

Gradually, Will shifted to lie beside Hannibal, their limbs tangling lazily as the adrenaline ebbed away. Hannibal turned to face him, his expression softened, the fierce intensity replaced by a tender vulnerability. They lay in silence, the earlier frenzy replaced by a peaceful intimacy that spoke volumes. In these quiet moments, shared looks and soft touches conveyed the depth of their connection—a silent dialogue woven through the calm. Here, in the aftermath, their bond solidified further, unspoken assurances passed between them in the comfort of mutual understanding and shared satisfaction.

Will, regaining his composure first after their intense encounter, quipped with a light smirk, "Maybe we should have done that sooner." To his surprise, Hannibal's response was a hearty laugh, rich and unguarded—a sound of pure amusement that Will had never heard from him before. The laughter was deeply, vibrantly human, momentarily startling Will. He was struck by the warmth it stirred in him, a shockingly deep desire to hear it again. *Since when was that something I wanted?* , he thought, his mind grappling with the unexpected emotional twist. But he shelved the thought for later reflection.

“Seems like the endorphins are really hitting you, huh?” Will teased gently, a hint of curiosity in his voice. Hannibal’s laugh and shaken Will from his perch atop Hanniball. He slid off, but only slightly, pulling Hannibal into a warm embrace instead. They settled into the new arrangement–less than comfortable on the floor, but both too languid to do anything else–with Hannibal’s head resting on Will’s chest and an arm lazily thrown over Will’s stomach.

Hannibal’s eyes sparkled with an unusual softness as he gazed up at Will. “It’s not just the endorphins, Will,” he began, voice low and sincere. “I am in awe of you. You hunted, killed, and brought your kill back to me. It’s all I’ve ever wanted for you, for us–to embrace who we are together. Seeing you like this, it fulfills a vision I’ve had for a long time. You are magnificent, Will.”

The raw, unfiltered sincerity in Hannibal’s words hit Will like a tidal wave. His empathy, usually nothing more than a tool he resented for the burden it placed on him, now opened him up to the depth of Hannibal’s emotions. He could feel the intensity of Hannibal’s admiration and affection, a profound, almost worshipful devotion that stirred something deep and warm within him.

Looking down into Hannibal’s eyes, Will felt that warmth bubble up in his chest. He leaned in and pressed a chaste kiss to Hannibal’s lips—a gentle, lingering touch, free of the usual electrifying tension that crackled between them. It was their most tender kiss yet, quietly affirming something profound shifting in their dynamic.

Pulling back slightly, Will’s voice was low and contemplative, “We should probably do something about the body.” Hannibal, still touched by remnants of laughter, agreed smoothly, “Yes, I quite agree.”

With a thoughtful frown, Will confessed, “After I killed him, I imagined displaying him. With you. As a claim on you. To tell everybody that you were mine.” His tone was serious, yet there was a hint of fantasy in his voice, imagining a bold declaration of their bond.

Hannibal’s eyes deepened with intrigue, and he murmured appreciatively, “That would be quite the statement, Will.”

However, Will shook his head slightly, the strategic part of his mind regaining control. “But we can’t risk arousing Jack’s suspicions too much. Not yet.” He sighed, a mix of resignation and resolve settling over him. “For now, I’ll settle for butchering him and eating him. Making him part of us in a way no one else can claim.”

Hannibal’s eyelids fluttered, revealing a predatory gleam. The hunger was unmistakable as his lips curved into a slow, dangerous smile, the corners lifting in anticipation and approval. The intensity of his gaze, rather than overwhelming, resonated with the hunger echoing in Will’s chest at the thought of consuming his kill, allowing it to become part of both of them. Will could feel the weight of Hannibal’s emotions, a silent communication of their bond.

“Then that’s what we shall do, my dear boy.”

Dragging Tier's body into Hannibal's basement— *of course he has a murder basement* , Will thought with affectionate amusement—passed in a haze of adrenaline and euphoric exhaustion. Will was content to let Hannibal take the lead on butchering the meat; the methodical precision with which Hannibal handled the tools and flesh was mesmerizing, each movement a testament to his expertise. Even in these grim moments, Hannibal was an artist, and Will watched, spellbound by the efficiency and care taken with each cut. Will found himself anticipating the next time he could stand by Hannibal's side, learning the art that Hannibal mastered so effortlessly.

As they ascended the staircase to the upper level of Hannibal's home, Will felt a curious anticipation stirring within him. He had navigated many rooms of this meticulously curated house, yet Hannibal's bedroom had remained a mystery—until now. The door swung open, revealing a space that immediately felt different from the rest of the house. It was opulent, yes, but there was an intimate quality here that was absent elsewhere. A piece of Samurai armor stood like a silent sentinel in one corner, its presence both imposing and strangely fitting, suggesting protection and hidden strength.

The room was undeniably personal, filled with an array of objects that spoke of Hannibal's complex identity and tastes. The walls were adorned with rich, dark hues, and every piece of furniture seemed to tell a story. However, Will's gaze was inexorably drawn to the centerpiece of the room—the bed. It was large and inviting, draped with plush bedding that promised a tactile delight. Will could almost feel the luxurious softness of the sheets against his skin, the comfort that beckoned him to abandon his usual vigilance.

The weight of the day's events hung heavily on Will. The fierce confrontation with Randall Tier had been a draining battle for dominance, a stark reminder of the brutal parts of himself he had to engage to survive and protect. Following that, the visceral intensity of his encounter with Hannibal had pushed him to new emotional depths. The combination left him feeling profoundly altered, a sense of transformation that was both exhilarating and exhausting. He knew there would be much to unpack, many emotions and revelations to sort through, but those thoughts would have to wait.

First, they had to get clean. Hannibal's shower, designed with both luxury and utility in mind, was spacious enough for two, a perfect blend for the moment's needs. As they stepped into the steam-filled enclosure, the mood shifted from the intense heat of earlier encounters to a gentle intimacy that filled the space with a soothing warmth.

"Here, let me," Will murmured softly, his voice a soft contrast to the earlier intensity of the evening. He reached for the shampoo, his hands careful and deliberate as he lathered it into Hannibal's hair. As Will's fingers massaged soothing circles, focusing on the tender areas he had gripped firmly, Hannibal's eyes fluttered shut, his body visibly relaxing under the gentle ministrations, a soft sigh escaping him in quiet relief.

"Lean back," Will instructed, his tone low and soothing. He supported Hannibal's head, easing it under the warm cascade of the shower head. The suds rinsed away, flowing over Hannibal's well-defined muscles, disappearing into the drain. Each movement of Will's hands was deliberate, the care evident in his touch.

As Will applied the conditioner, letting it sit to nourish the strands, his hands didn’t idle. He took a soft washcloth and began a methodical cleanse of Hannibal’s body. Each pass of the cloth was gentle, almost reverent, as he ensured no trace of their earlier activities remained. Will focused on the areas he had bitten and slapped, using extra care around Hannibal’s surely tender hole.

Will hadn't anticipated the depth of tenderness that infused these moments with Hannibal. Initially, his pursuit had been dominated by thoughts of control and dominance—elements still present in the undercurrents of his actions. Yet, there was an unexpected gentleness now, a nurturing care that seemed just as natural and imperative as the control he so relished. This surprising shift did not diminish his hold; rather, it felt like a profound extension of his claim, imbuing their connection with a complex layer of rightness that resonated deeply within him.

Noticing Hannibal's relaxation, Will observed him lean slightly against the cool tiles, his body yielding to the fatigue and the comforting routine they'd fallen into. "Rinse the conditioner out of your hair," Will suggested softly, his hands moving to cleanse his own body, motions efficient but unhurried.

Hannibal complied, the water sluicing over him, washing away the remnants of the product. They continued their routines in a companionable hush, the only sounds the steady beat of the shower and their synchronized movements.

Exiting the shower, the need for words remained minimal. They dried off and dressed in clean pajamas, Will pulling on a pair of Hannibal’s soft, well-worn pants and a shirt. The fabric was luxurious against his skin, far softer than anything in his own wardrobe, enhancing the physical comfort of the moment.

Will couldn't help but feel a quiet thrill wearing Hannibal's clothes—not just for their quality but for what they represented. He caught the look of quiet approval in Hannibal's eyes, a subtle pleasure at seeing Will enveloped in his garments. Will recognized the possessiveness in that gaze, a mirrored sentiment to his own feelings of claiming.

Of course he’s pleased to have me in his clothing , Will thought without heat, a small smile playing at his lips. There was an unspoken agreement that Will would spend the night–he had texted his neighbor about the dogs–so as they transitioned to the comfort of Hannibal’s room, Will walked over to the bed with a sense of familiarity and eased himself under the sheets. The luxurious fabric caressed his skin, confirming his earlier anticipation of their soft, enveloping comfort.

Hannibal paused at the edge of the bed, a rare hesitance visible in his demeanor. The usual composure that cloaked him seemed momentarily lifted, revealing a vulnerability that had started to surface more frequently in their interactions. He lingered momentarily, his eyes shifting towards Will, filled with a silent question of his welcome.

"Get over here," Will beckoned, his voice soft but firm, extending an inviting arm. Hannibal’s response was immediate; he closed the distance between them in a few swift steps and nestled close to Will. His head found a resting place on Will’s chest, and he wrapped his arms tightly around him. Hannibal's legs entwined with Will's, pulling himself as close as physically possible, as if trying to dissolve any remaining space between them.

They lay in silence, the only sound the soft rhythm of their breathing syncing in the quiet room. The need for words faded into the background, replaced by the comfort of their closeness. As sleep began to claim Hannibal, he murmured into the tranquility, "Will, stay with me." It wasn’t a plea for this night alone but a deeper, more implicit request for something enduring.

"Where else would I go?" Will responded softly, his words a gentle whisper through Hannibal's hair, sealing the promise of his presence. Contentment settled over them like another blanket, and with the warmth of Hannibal by his side, Will drifted off to sleep, the complexities of their relationship momentarily soothed by their shared stillness.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you liked!!

And if this made you blush, I'd be honored to hear about it in the comments or in my asks on tumblr! @graciereadshannigram

xoxoxox

Truest Expressions

Chapter Notes

beta'd by Debbie_e and hannibals-grahamcracker, they are both WONDERFUL <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The morning light was just beginning to filter through the curtains when the shrill ring of Will's phone shattered the quiet. *Why is my phone always interrupting time with Hannibal?* Grumbling, Will reached for the device, his hand brushing against Hannibal's as he did so. The voice on the other end was unmistakably Jack's, tinged with the usual urgency that seemed magnified by frustration. "Randall Tier has been reported missing," he barked into the phone, his tone conveying more than just concern–it was outright frustration.

Will, still half-asleep, squinted at the clock. "Jack, it's 5:00 in the morning. Can't this wait?" he mumbled, the annoyance clear in his voice.

“This is urgent, Will.” There was a brief pause, then a reluctant, "But fine, go back to sleep, we’ll talk when you get in later today," from Jack before the line went dead. Will tossed the phone aside and settled back into the warmth of the bed, pulling Hannibal closer. The comfort of their embrace felt like a sanctuary, a contrast to the disturbance that had just intruded upon their morning.

Despite their attempt to snuggle back into slumber, the interruption had effectively dispelled any remaining drowsiness. Will yawned, stretching slightly, and turned to look at Hannibal. The morning light streamed in, casting a gentle glow that highlighted Hannibal's bare chest, the sheets having slipped during their restless sleep. The warmth radiating from his skin and the way the light caught the slight disarray of his usually immaculate hair, now mussed by sleep, softened his features, making him appear younger and unexpectedly vulnerable.

As Will's gaze lingered, a flood of vivid memories from the previous night washed over him, each more potent than the last. He remembered the mixed expression of pride and anticipation on Hannibal's face when he had revealed the macabre tableau in the dining room, the stuttering tension as Hannibal described his darkest fantasies, the intoxicating feel of Hannibal's lips tight around him, and the exquisite, almost unbearable heat as he finally claimed Hannibal fully. Each flashback sparked a surge of exhilaration and a deep, satisfying hunger.

Will shook his head slightly, trying to dispel the intensity of the recollections, only to meet Hannibal's knowing, slightly amused smirk. It was as if Hannibal could read every lascivious thought passing through Will's mind, understanding the depth of the unspoken hunger that still lingered between them. The air was thick with unvoiced promises and mutual understanding; the connection they had forged was undeniable–raw and profound. It was

startling, how perfectly their desires aligned, how naturally Will seemed to fill the spaces in Hannibal that craved control and submission.

Hannibal broke the silence–and the building tension–asking, “How did you sleep, Will? Well, I hope?”

“Better than I have in a long time,” Will yawned as he stretched out. It was the truth–he couldn’t remember sleeping that well. It wasn’t just the physical exhaustion; it was the emotional release, the sense of reclaiming control, and the comfort of being with Hannibal. For the first time in ages, he felt settled, at peace with himself, and strangely content. “You?”

“A rare, restful night. It seems the events of yesterday were quite… rigorous.” Hannibal sat up further, his posture deliberately composed, but Will noticed the slight hesitation, the way Hannibal’s eyes briefly flashed with something softer, almost vulnerable.

Will recognized the effort Hannibal was making to maintain his usual facade, and his eyes narrowed slightly. Despite everything, Hannibal was still hiding. “Invigorating. That’s one way to put it.”

Hannibal smirked. “It appears you’ve come into your own, Will. The hunt, the kill. It suited you.”

Will’s thoughts were sharp, focused. The hunt and kill had felt euphoric, settling something deep inside him. “And you, Hannibal? Did last night suit you? Did you find what you were looking for?”

He watched Hannibal closely, seeking any hint of genuine reaction, any crack in the mask. Will sought out Hannibal’s gaze, catching a flicker of uncertainty that was quickly hidden. “I found everything I desired… and more. Your transformation is remarkable.”

Will’s eyes narrowed, his tone growing harder. “Transformation. Is that what you call it? Embracing what I’ve always been?”

“You’ve known your true nature for some time now. Yesterday, you simply allowed it to flourish at last.” There was an underlying tension in Hannibal’s voice, a small note of smugness that Will couldn’t miss. Hannibal had been orchestrating this transformation from the beginning, guiding him toward this moment. The satisfaction in Hannibal’s eyes was clear–he had gotten exactly what he wanted.

Will’s jaw clenched slightly. Hannibal’s smugness chafed. The realization of his true nature was something Hannibal had nurtured, encouraged, and now, finally, witnessed in full bloom. It irked Will, the idea that Hannibal had been right about him all along, that this was what he had been pushing Will toward.

He took a deep breath, letting the irritation settle as a sense of satisfaction rose at the memory of how beautiful Hannibal had been the night before. “And you were there to witness it. To bask in it.” Will’s tone dripped with a sultry edge, the word “bask” laced with a heavy insinuation, emphasizing the depths of Hannibal’s submission the previous night. Hannibal might have orchestrated Will’s transformation, but they both knew how deeply Hannibal had

reveled in submitting to Will's dominance. The vulnerability, the raw pleasure–these were unexpected territories for someone like Hannibal, who thrived on control. Will leaned in slightly, the air between them charged once more with the memory of their intense connection, his words a reminder of just how much Hannibal had enjoyed relinquishing that control.

"To witness your transformation was a privilege," Hannibal breathed, a hint of vulnerability seeping into his usually composed voice. "Your instincts are formidable."

"Instincts are one thing. Actions are another. You know that better than anyone, Hannibal." Will leaned closer, his gaze piercing, the intensity of his presence almost overwhelming. He was alluding to the fact that, up until now, he had rarely acted on his instincts with true intention. Last night had been different–deliberate, powerful, transformative. There was a clear purpose behind every move, every touch.

"And maybe," Will continued, his voice low and charged with meaning, "you're starting to understand that, too. Acting on instincts you've kept hidden." The implication hung in the air between them, heavy with the realization that Hannibal, too, was exploring uncharted territory in his submission. It was a revelation that both excited and unsettled Will, adding another layer to their intricate dynamic.

"Yes, actions define us. Shape us. They are our truest expressions." Hannibal spoke in a whisper, his eyes intense and searching.

Will took a moment to consider how Hannibal's truest expression was found in submission. It was an unexpected but undeniable truth. The idea that Hannibal's deepest self was revealed in the act of surrender was both startling and profoundly fitting. Will mulled over what this meant for them. They might be far more compatible than he had initially thought, their natures intertwined in ways he was only beginning to grasp.

Will was well aware that he had never found this kind of true expression with anyone else–only with Hannibal. The freedom and intensity of it were unparalleled. It was exhilarating and liberating in ways he hadn't anticipated. He wondered if this was new for Hannibal too. A pang of insecurity tugged at him. Was he truly special in this? Or had others before him elicited the same raw, unfiltered responses from Hannibal?

The uncertainty gnawed at him, but there was a sense of possessiveness too. He didn't want to share this unique connection with anyone else. He needed to know if Hannibal's submission was as singular as his own transformation felt.

Will's voice was measured, but the undercurrent of jealousy was unmistakable. "Have you ever… expressed yourself this way before? With anyone else?" His eyes bore into Hannibal's, searching for any hint of deceit.

Hannibal's gaze softened, a rare vulnerability flickering across his face. "Will, you are the only person with whom I've allowed myself to be this… unguarded." His tone was sincere, his words carefully chosen to convey the depth of his truth.

Before Hannibal could finish, Will's possessiveness flared. "What about Alana?" he snapped, the question laced with both anger and insecurity. He knew, deep down, that Alana could never pull this out of Hannibal, but he needed to hear it from Hannibal himself.

Hannibal, caught slightly off guard, had the good sense to look mildly apprehensive under Will's imposing presence. "Ah, I suspected that might come up," he admitted, his voice maintaining its usual calm but with a trace of caution.

"Oh, you suspected, did you?" Will's sarcasm sliced through the morning tranquility, his eyes narrowing just slightly as he studied Hannibal's reaction. The early light painted a soft halo around them, but the tension between them was anything but serene.

Hannibal blinked slowly, his usual mask of composure intact, yet there was a slight shift, a readiness to tread carefully given Will's overt display of possessiveness. "Did you suspect that I would be okay with sharing you?" Will pressed further, his voice dropping lower, threading a dangerous note through his words.

"Will, I…" Hannibal began, pausing as if carefully choosing his next words. His hesitation spoke volumes to Will, who could almost hear the cogs turning as Hannibal searched for a way to placate him without revealing too much. "You are the only one I care about. Alana means nothing in comparison to you."

As Hannibal spoke, Will's face tightened, his eyes sharpening. Hannibal's measured response seemed only to stoke the fires of Will's agitation further. In one swift motion, Will rolled himself on top of Hannibal, pinning him down with his weight. He could feel the quickened beat of Hannibal's heart beneath him, the subtle hitch in Hannibal's breath. Will found his hand drifting up to Hannibal's neck, lightly gripping, not enough to hurt, but enough to convey his intensity. "Absolutely not. Apparently, I didn't get my point across clearly." His fingers pressed a tad more firmly for emphasis. "You. Belong. To. Me. Nobody else."

Will's face was centimeters from Hannibal's, their breaths mingling. The intensity of his gaze was unwavering, and Hannibal's face locked in place. A flicker of something primal passed between them, a silent acknowledgment of the power dynamics at play. Hannibal's eyes darkened, reflecting a mix of submission and excitement, but Will's focus was unrelenting.

"You're the only one who matters to me, Will," Hannibal reiterated, his voice soft but steady. "Alana is a distraction, a shield. My true focus, my true desire, is you." His hands gently rested on Will's hips, a grounding gesture likely meant to soothe the storm Will felt brewing within himself.

Will's grip on Hannibal's throat eased slightly, but he didn't move away. "Prove it," he demanded, his voice a growl that vibrated through the stillness of the morning. "End things with her."

Hannibal seemed to catch the gravity of Will's words fully then, his reply coming more cautiously. "Very well. If it is all the same to you, I would like to end gradually, make it feel less sudden for Ala–"

"–Doctor Bloom," he corrected himself swiftly at Will's hardening gaze.

“It is not ‘all the same’ to me. You’ll do it now.”

Hannibal’s initial response was a mixture of incredulity and arousal. “Now?” he echoed, his voice tinged with disbelief. Under Will, he could feel Hannibal’s body responding, a testament to the intertwining of fear and desire.

“It is not ‘all the same’ to me. You’ll do it now,” Will insisted, his gaze intense. He could feel the growing hardness against his ass, a clear indication of Hannibal’s physical reaction to the command. Without missing a beat, Will ground down against him, a firm reminder of his dominance. The movement drew a soft moan from Hannibal, a sound that vibrated with both pleasure and a trace of desperation.

“Will, it’s 5:45 am, it would be unspeakably rude–” Hannibal started, attempting to stall.

“Call. Her.” Will cut him off sharply, punctuating each word with a deliberate grind, eliciting another involuntary moan from Hannibal. Nodding towards the cell phone on the nightstand, Will’s command was clear.

Reluctantly, Hannibal reached for the phone, his movements hesitant as he maintained eye contact with Will. The intensity between them crackled. “Will, are you sure this is necessary?” Hannibal asked, his voice wavering slightly as he unlocked the phone.

“Oh yes, Doctor Lecter,” Will responded, his voice a sultry whisper as he leaned in to nuzzle Hannibal’s neck. His lips found the sensitive skin, kissing and lightly sucking, causing Hannibal to shudder beneath him. Will’s hand moved to tangle in Hannibal’s hair, gripping it firmly, asserting his control. His mouth continued its exploration, trailing down to Hannibal’s chest, where he paused to lavish attention on a nipple. Taking it into his mouth, he rolled it on his tongue, nipped gently with his teeth, drawing a sharp gasp from Hannibal.

“What, exactly, do you want me to say?” Hannibal managed to ask, his voice strained with a mix of arousal and concern.

“Tell her you’re no longer interested. Make something up,” Will murmured against Hannibal’s skin, continuing his torment. Despite the intense situation, Hannibal found himself responding, his free hand wandering down Will’s side, wrapping around to grasp at Will’s firm ass.

“Focus, Hannibal. Call Alana,” Will commanded, intercepting Hannibal’s wandering hand and redirecting his attention firmly back to the task at hand.

Taking a deep breath, Hannibal centered himself, attempting to marshal his composure. “I ask that you pause your… attention while I make this phone call,” he requested, his voice almost pleading.

Will paused, a sly grin playing on his lips as he agreed, at least momentarily. He watched intently as Hannibal dialed and waited for the call to connect. The moment he heard Alana’s sleepy voice coming through the speaker–“ *Hannibal? It’s early…”* –Will seized the opportunity to escalate their game.

Silently, Will slid under the covers, his gaze fixed on the enticing sight of Hannibal's cock, poised and inviting between his spread legs. His mouth watered, lips parting in anticipation of the taste and heat he craved. Positioning himself between Hannibal's thighs, he watched for a moment, savoring the anticipatory tension. As Hannibal struggled to maintain his composure on the phone, Will enveloped him in warmth, taking him deep into his mouth.

Will's tongue danced along the underside, savoring the pulsing veins and the silky texture of the skin. He made a small, appreciative noise in the back of his throat, the vibrations causing Hannibal to shudder above him. Feeling Hannibal's cock swell further, straining against the skilled movement of his mouth, Will's strokes became more deliberate, each one drawing Hannibal into a state of raw, uncontrollable desire.

Hannibal's strained voice mixed with the intimate sounds from underneath the covers, creating an electrifying, taboo atmosphere in which Will basked. Hannibal's breath hitched, but he managed to murmur into the phone, "Alana, I need to speak with you about us… I've come to realize that my feelings have changed. Continuing as we are wouldn't be honest."

Beneath the covers, Will's actions intensified. He continued lightly teasing with his tongue, tracing tantalizingly slow circles around the very tip of Hannibal's cock. Each deliberate swirl sent shivers up Hannibal's spine, coaxing a deeper, more ragged hitch in his breath. Will's tongue lavished attention on the sensitive area, dipping into the slit with a provocatively slow motion, savoring the pre-come that had begun to bead there. The heat of his mouth contrasted with the cool air of the room, wrapping Hannibal in a cocoon of wet, enveloping warmth that dared him to lose control right there on the call.

"Hannibal, are you sure now is the right time to discuss this?" Her voice was tinged with sleep and confusion, laced with an uncertainty that crept through the phone line like a chill.

Will responded by taking more of Hannibal in his mouth, the warmth and wetness enveloping the shaft as he slid down smoothly. His tongue worked more aggressively, swirling around the pulsing length, pressing against the sensitive underside with fervent eagerness. Will's own arousal was palpable, the heat building within him as he savored the weight and taste of Hannibal, driven by the reactions he elicited. Hannibal's groans and shivers spurred Will on, feeding his desire to push Hannibal further, to blur the line between pleasure and overwhelming need.

"Yes, it is necessary," Hannibal's voice wavered, breath hitching. "And I find that I cannot give you what you deserve. My focus has… shifted." The last word trailed off into a soft groan as Will's hands, warm and assertive, found their way up Hannibal's torso, teasing his nipples with gentle pinches and rolls. Will's touch was firm, yet tender, his fingers kneading and twisting, eliciting soft gasps that made his own desire surge.

Will felt Hannibal shift slightly, his body tensing as he adjusted his position. The subtle tremor in Hannibal's muscles told Will he was struggling to contain his sounds of pleasure. The thought crossed Will's mind that Hannibal might be shoving his knuckles into his mouth again, trying to stifle the moans and whines that threatened to escape. Will could almost picture it, the way Hannibal's lips would close around his hand, the muffled sounds of his pleasure just barely contained, and it caused his own cock to thicken.

Alana's voice cut through the charged atmosphere, carrying a new weight, a mix of hurt and suspicion creeping into her tone. *"Is there someone else, Hannibal?"* she asked, her words laced with an edge that hinted at her growing unease.

Will, feeling a surge of possessive triumph, responded not with words but with action. He deepened his embrace of Hannibal, swallowing him whole, showcasing a breathtaking lack of gag reflex as he pressed his nose into the soft, coarse hair at Hannibal's base. The sudden, deeper motion drew a ragged, stifled moan from Hannibal, his speech momentarily faltering.

"No, Alana, it's not like that," Hannibal managed, though his voice stuttered under the strain of maintaining decorum. "It's not that there's another person, more a… reevaluation of my priorities. His body tensed and trembled, each quiver a testament to the overwhelming sensations that Will's relentless attention was eliciting, every touch and caress magnifying the pleasure.

As a reward for Hannibal's strained diplomacy, Will's actions became even more purposeful. He added to the mix, orchestrating a symphony of dual stimulation. He enveloped Hannibal with a deep, relentless rhythm, his tongue swirling provocatively while his hand provided a firm, steady pressure, pumping in sync with his oral movements. The coordinated assault heightened the pleasure, each stroke of Will's hand and mouth driving both closer to the edge, intensifying the throbbing heat between them.

"Hannibal, are you alright? Your voice sounds… off," Alana's voice was now completely alert.

Hannibal's response was delayed by a sharp intake of breath as his hips instinctively bucked into the warm cavern of Will's mouth. He managed to glance down, locking eyes with Will, barely visible under the covers, his gaze flooded with a mix of desperation and intense pleasure. Hannibal's eyes pleaded for a moment of mercy, a brief pause in Will's relentless ministrations, but Will was far from merciful.

Will continued undeterred. His hand that had previously teased Hannibal's nipples wandered lower, exploring with bold certainty. He traced the sensitive skin of Hannibal's perineum, before pressing against the tender rim, intensifying the stimulation. Will's touch was deliberate and invasive, his fingers pressing and circling, denying Hannibal any reprieve. Every silent plea in Hannibal's eyes was met with further provocation, Will's determination to keep him on the edge unwavering.

"I–Yes, I am fine, just a bit…" Hannibal's voice was a strained whisper, barely holding onto the edges of normalcy as he responded, his hips continuing to thrust rhythmically into the dual pleasures orchestrated by Will. The intensity of the sensations coursing through him rendered his usually composed voice shaky and uneven. "Just a bit… under the weather."

As Hannibal struggled to maintain any semblance of composure, Will's finger withdrew slightly, only to return with a renewed purpose. He alternated between taking Hannibal deeply into his throat and using his tongue to play lasciviously around the tip. The sensation of Hannibal's pulsing length, hard and thick in his mouth, drove Will to emit a moan that vibrated against the sensitive flesh, louder and more fervent than he intended. A wicked thought flashed through his mind, *I hope Alana hears this* , fueling his reckless abandon.

The vibrations from Will's moan sent tremors through Hannibal's body. Alana's voice cut through, sharp and fraught with suspicion. *"Hannibal, is someone there with you?"*

Encouraged by her alertness, and wanting to push Hannibal even further, Will intensified his efforts. His mouth and hand moved in a synchronized dance of escalating fervor. He pressed the flat of his tongue against the underside of Hannibal's shaft, feeling the pulsing veins, then enveloped him fully, his lips meeting the base in a tight seal. Every pull and suck was designed to draw Hannibal closer to the brink, to a precipice of overwhelming pleasure, yet holding him just shy of release.

Hannibal's body tensed, a visible shudder running through him. His hand gripped the sheets, knuckles whitening, while his other hand, still holding the phone, shook. Will, relentless, worked with a fierce intensity, his every move calculated to render Hannibal undone. Hannibal's breaths came in ragged gasps, barely suppressing his moans of pleasure.

Audibly flustered, Hannibal's voice tightened. "No, no. Just me. Listen, Alana, now is not the best time, but it was important to be clear with you. I hold you in the highest regard, and it's crucial you know this." He nearly rushed through the last words as Will intensified his actions below the covers.

Just as Hannibal tried to regain a semblance of control, Will took him deeply once more. The warm, wet embrace of his mouth sliding all the way down, Will's throat relaxing around him. The edge of his teeth lightly grazed the sensitive skin in a way that sent shockwaves through Hannibal's body.

"I see. We can talk more about this later, then," Alana responded, her tone cool, tinged with a reserved acceptance that masked her underlying suspicion.

Hannibal's voice hitched up an octave, a telltale sign of his strained control. "Thank you for understanding. Goodbye, Alana." He ended the call with haste, his body threatening to shake apart.

Will heard the phone drop to the bed with a soft *thump* as Hannibal whined, finally free to let his noises of pleasure spill out unrestrained. Will briefly paused, his lips still warm and wet against Hannibal's shaft, to whisper, "Good boy," the words dripping with approval and dominance. His voice, hoarse from the strain of having Hannibal deep in his throat, growled, "I want you to come down my throat."

Will wasted no time, diving back down with fervent determination. Hannibal's hands clenched the sheets, his body trembling with mounting intensity. Will's tongue and lips worked in perfect harmony, every flick and swirl designed to ruin Hannibal. He could feel Hannibal's thighs quivering, the muscles tensing with each wave of pleasure that crashed through him. The desperation in Hannibal's breaths, the way his hips bucked involuntarily, spurred Will on.

Will's own desire built with each whimper and moan from Hannibal, cock throbbing painfully against the mattress. His body felt like it was on fire, every nerve ending alive with the anticipation of release. The friction of the mattress against his erection was both torturous

and exquisite, each movement sending jolts of pleasure through his body. As he sucked Hannibal deeper, his control slipped, and his teeth grazed Hannibal's shaft ever so slightly.

At the feeling of Will's teeth, Hannibal's body arched, a deep, guttural moan escaping his lips as he reached his climax. Hot liquid shot into Will's mouth, and Will, with a pleased hum, eagerly swallowed, savoring the taste and power he held in this moment. The sensation of Hannibal coming down his throat, the desperate sounds of pleasure filling the room, brought Will to the brink of his own climax.

Grinding into the mattress with more purpose, Will continued to suck at Hannibal's cock, pleasuring him through the aftershocks. The desperate moans escaping Hannibal's lips combined with the sheer exhilaration of having such power over him pushed Will over the edge. His release was intense, a shuddering wave of ecstasy that left him breathless. He pulled off Hannibal, who whimpered with overstimulation, both of their bodies wracked with the aftershocks of pleasure.

As Will collapsed beside Hannibal, he could feel the tremors in his own legs, the lingering throbs of his release mingling with the warmth of Hannibal's body pressed against his. The room was filled with the sounds of their panting and the smells of sweat and sex, the air thick with their shared exertion and satisfaction.

"Satisfied?" Hannibal asked, his voice a mix of amusement and contentment as Will turned to curl around his chest.

"Something like that," Will said with a laugh. He snuggled into Hannibal, the possessive beast in his chest assuaged by their performance for Alana. The feel of Hannibal's skin against his own was soothing, a tactile reminder of their bond.

"She'll want to talk face to face, you know," Will groused, the thought of Alana intruding on their moment bringing a frown to his face.

Hannibal's fingers traced soothing patterns on Will's back. "I'll put off that conversation if possible, but I have no qualms repeating myself to her."

Will felt a surge of irritation, but he knew Hannibal was telling the truth. "I need to get ready to drive down to Quantico," Will sighed, the practicalities of the day intruding on their blissful morning. The scents and warmth of the bed were reluctant to let him go.

"You are, of course, welcome to use my shower," Hannibal offered. They quickly realized that Will didn't have any clean clothes to change into, and the ones he was wearing last night were ruined with various body fluids.

Hannibal, ever the prepared host, said, "I have some clothes that would fit you." He got out of bed and disappeared into his closet, reappearing a few minutes later with a stack of clean clothes. "Go shower, I'll get started on coffee and have breakfast ready for you when you're done."

Will gave Hannibal a lazy grin as he said, "I don't usually eat breakfast, but I won't complain if you're cooking." Hauling himself out of bed with a groan, Will darted in and stole a quick

kiss from Hannibal. The brief kiss was tender, a fleeting connection before the demands of the day pulled them apart. With another flash of a smile, Will padded into the bathroom to get ready for the day.

Will stepped into the lab at Quantico, still savoring the memory of coffee and breakfast with Hannibal. The morning had been unexpectedly serene. After their intense night, Hannibal had insisted on preparing breakfast. Will had showered, and when he was done, he found a fresh towel waiting along with the clothes Hannibal had gathered for him. A guest toiletry and grooming kit, complete with high-end products, sat on the counter.

He had taken his time, cleaning up his beard and styling his hair, enjoying the luxury of the expensive products. Feeling refreshed and put together, he headed downstairs to the kitchen. Hannibal greeted him with a table set for a gourmet breakfast–scrambled eggs with truffle, fresh fruit, and perfectly toasted bread. The aroma of freshly brewed coffee filled the room.

They had shared lighthearted banter about the merits of eating breakfast. Will had chuckled at Hannibal's culinary precision, while Hannibal had playfully mocked Will's usual breakfast of convenience. The conversation had shifted to their plans for the day–Will's team meeting and a lecture to teach, and Hannibal's day filled with patients. The familiarity of their routine brought a sense of comfort to Will. It felt a lot like their old dynamic, before everything went awry with the encephalitis and the ensuing chaos. Knowing that not everything had changed in their relationship made Will feel relieved and happy. They had said their goodbyes, each heading into their respective worlds of work.

The familiar sterile smell of the lab greeted him, mingling with the soft hum of equipment. Price and Zeller's laughter and friendly jabs echoed through the space, a grounding reminder of normalcy amidst his chaotic thoughts.

Will's attire was different today; he had showered at Hannibal's and was wearing some of Hannibal's clothes. They fit him suspiciously well, almost as if Hannibal had them tailored for him. Will couldn't help but roll his eyes at the thought. Of course, Hannibal would know his exact measurements. *The man probably has them memorized* . The soft, expensive fabric felt comforting against his skin, a subtle reminder of the morning they shared.

"Well, look who decided to show up," Price teased, looking up from his microscope. "Will Graham, you actually look… rested. And is that a new wardrobe I see?"

A smile crept across Will's face at the friendly ribbing. "Yeah, something like that. Thought I'd change things up," he deflected, not wanting to explain exactly where the new clothes were from.

Price and Zeller exchanged glances. "Must be some pretty special clothes to make you look this good," Jimmy snarked.

"Yeah, what gives, Graham? You've got a spring in your step," Zeller added, his eyes narrowing with curiosity.

Before Will could respond, Jack entered the lab with his usual commanding presence. “That’s enough, get it together, team, we’ve got a situation.”

Will noticed that Jack looked a little worse for wear, the lines on his face more pronounced, his shoulders heavier. The weight of Bella’s declining health seemed etched into every crease of his skin. Jack’s eyes seemed dimmer, burdened by a weight that hadn’t been there before. Will felt a pang of sympathy, a fleeting moment of understanding that he quickly shook off. Jack had never shown concern for Will’s health as it deteriorated; why should Will feel too terrible about the toll Bella was taking on him? Bitterness simmered beneath his sympathy, a reminder of Jack’s relentless demands.

“Tier’s gone missing,” Jack announced once all eyes were on him. “We don’t know if he’s on the run or if something else has happened. I need everyone to stay sharp and be ready for anything.” The team nodded, their expressions shifting from casual to focused. Jack continued, his voice strained but steady. “We’re going to keep monitoring for any new developments. If another body turns up, I want us to be ready. Dismissed.”

Will began to gather his things, mentally preparing for the class he had to teach later. He was just about to head out when Jack called him over.

“Will, a word,” Jack said, his tone brooking no argument.

Will walked over, trying to keep his expression neutral. Jack’s eyes were hard, a mixture of frustration and disappointment.

“Tier’s disappearance is a problem,” Jack started, his voice low, “If only we had solid proof that he was our guy, we could have arrested him before he vanished.”

Will’s chest tightened, a flash of anger sparking within him. Of course, Jack would blame him. But underneath that anger, a dark amusement bubbled up. If only Jack knew what Will had done to Tier the night before, the brutal satisfaction of the hunt. What he was planning on doing with the meat from Tier’s body, a grotesque irony that Jack would never understand. He forced himself to stay calm. “I did what I could, Jack.”

Jack sighed, rubbing his temples. “I need you to talk to Hannibal. See if he has any insight on where Randall might have run to. Maybe he can help us figure this out.”

Will’s lips twitched with a dark, twisted amusement. Jack had no idea how right he was. Hannibal certainly had insight into Tier’s fate, more than Jack could ever imagine. He could almost see Hannibal’s knowing smile, the silent agreement between them as they played their secret game.

Will nodded curtly. “I’ll speak to him.”

Jack dismissed him with a wave, and Will turned to leave, feeling tension in his shoulders. As he walked towards the door, he was accosted by Brian and Jimmy, curious looks on their faces.

“Hey, Will,” Price called out, his tone lighter than Jack’s. “You look good. Those clothes actually fit you properly.”

Will scoffed lightly. “I’ve always known how to dress, Jimmy. It just doesn’t often feel like something worth my time.”

It was true, but only to a point. Will’s usual flannels and worn-out pants were soft, familiar, and didn’t itch. Until recently–very recently, as in earlier that morning–more fitted clothing had always made him feel like he was suffocating. Yet, somehow, the clothes Hannibal had provided felt different. They fit perfectly, comfortably, as if tailored just for him. The fabric hugged him in all the right places, a constant reminder of the morning’s intimacy. Will couldn’t help but smirk at the thought, realizing that money could indeed buy anything, even comfort in high-quality fabrics.

Zeller raised an eyebrow, clearly not buying it. “Uh-huh. So, what’s changed? You seeing someone?”

Will felt a strange impulse to tell the truth. The urge to share about his personal life was unexpected, almost disconcerting. Yet, he also scoffed at the absurdity of being fully honest. The thrill of the hunt, the satisfaction of the kill, and the intensity of the most gratifying sex of his life had left him in an unusually good mood. The memory of Randall Tier’s blood, the raw power coursing through him, and Hannibal’s surrender afterward had unlocked something within him.

Instead, Will deflected, shaking his head. “Just taking better care of myself, that’s all.”

Price wasn’t so easily deterred. “Come on Will. Spill. You’re practically glowing. There’s definitely someone.”

Will sighed, knowing they wouldn’t let it go. “Maybe,” he conceded, “there is someone I’m seeing. But that’s all you’re getting out of me.”

As he spoke, Will’s mind flickered with the thought of revealing the truth. The image of Price and Zeller’s faces if he told them who he was really seeing was almost too good to pass up. He could picture their reactions: wide-eyed, slack-jawed, utterly stunned. They would never believe it. After all, just a few weeks ago, he had been accusing Hannibal of being the Chesapeake Ripper. If they knew the full story–the truth about his newfound confidence and satisfaction–they would think he had completely lost his mind. The irony was almost too delicious to keep to himself, but he knew better than to indulge that urge.

Price and Zeller exchanged glances, grinning. “A mystery, huh? Well, I’m glad for you, Will. You deserve some happiness,” Zeller said.

Muttering a quick, “Thanks, Brian,” Will turned once more towards the door, just in time for Alana to walk in. Her hair was slightly disheveled, strands escaping her usually neat style. The faint smudges under her eyes betrayed a lack of sleep, and the makeup she wore couldn’t quite hide the dark circles. Her posture was tense, shoulders hunched as if carrying an invisible weight. She moved with a stiffness that revealed her unspoken stress, her usually confident stride now hesitant and weary.

Will immediately stiffened. Their last interaction had been far from pleasant, and given the morning they both had, he anticipated some awkwardness. Determined to maintain an air of professionalism, he straightened his posture and met her gaze.

Alana's eyes locked onto his, a flicker of surprise and something else–perhaps hurt or confusion–crossing her features. She paused, clearly taken aback by Will's improved appearance and the unspoken tension that hung between them. Will could feel the weight of her scrutiny, the unasked questions in her eyes. His mind flashed back to the intimate, raw moments with Hannibal, the power and vulnerability shared between them, and he felt a surge of conflicting emotions.

"Will," she greeted, her voice strained yet managing a semblance of composure. "You're looking… well." Her eyes swept over him, lingering on the details. The dark circles that had once shadowed his eyes were gone, replaced by a well-rested appearance. The clothes he wore, sharp and tailored, fit him perfectly, exuding an air of confidence she hadn't seen in him before.

"Alana," he replied, keeping his tone neutral. "I've been taking better care of myself." The words felt inadequate, a superficial explanation for the profound changes he had undergone. He knew she deserved more honesty, but the truth was far too complex and damning to share.

Alana's gaze didn't waver, the silence between them stretching uncomfortably. Her lips pressed into a thin line, as if she was holding back the flood of questions and emotions threatening to spill over. The vulnerability in her eyes was palpable, a stark contrast to the confident, assured woman he had known.

"Did I hear that right?" Alana's voice cut through the lab, drawing the attention of Price and Zeller, who were still lingering nearby. "You're seeing someone?"

Will felt a surge of satisfaction, a small, almost vindictive pleasure in the fact that she was curious. He allowed himself a brief moment of smugness. "Yeah, you heard right," he said, his tone calm but with a slight edge. "I am seeing someone."

He wanted to delve deeper, to publicly claim Hannibal, to let Alana know that he was the one distracting Hannibal on the phone earlier. The temptation was powerful, a primal instinct to stake his claim, but he held back. He could sense her discomfort, the way her expression tightened at his words. His empathy picked up on her unhappiness, and it stirred a mix of emotions within him. Their last encounter had been marked by tension and unresolved emotions. Now, with the added layer of Hannibal's recent breakup, the atmosphere was even more charged. Will felt a pang of guilt, knowing that his actions had contributed to her current state. Yet, there was also a grim satisfaction in the knowledge that he had won, that Hannibal had chosen him. A fierce, territorial pride surged within him, the thought of Hannibal being his and only his filling him with a dark, possessive pleasure.

Alana's eyes flickered with something unspoken as she continued to take in Will's appearance. The tension between them grew thick, the silence heavy with things left unsaid. Finally, she broke the silence, her voice soft but edged with genuine concern. "You really do seem better, Will. More stable. I'm glad to see it."

“Really, Alana?” he replied, a hint of sarcasm in his voice. “Commenting on my stability?” He glanced at his watch. “I have a lecture to prepare for, so if you’ll excuse me.”

Her face fell slightly, the forced smile faltering as his words hit home. She looked like she wanted to say more, to bridge the chasm that had formed between them, but she remained silent, watching him gather his things.

Will turned to leave, but then hesitated, feeling the weight of her gaze on his back. He took a deep breath, forcing himself to remain composed. As he walked away, he couldn’t help but feel a twisted sense of victory, coupled with a lingering unease. The lines between personal triumph and professional decorum had never felt more blurred. He left Alana standing there, a myriad of emotions playing across her face, the distance between them seeming wider than ever.

Will knew he was navigating dangerous territory, both with Hannibal and within his professional life. But for the first time in a long while, he felt like he was in control, and that feeling was worth every complicated interaction and subtle jab. He allowed himself a small smile as he prepared to face his students, ready to channel his newfound confidence into his teaching.

Classes over for the day, Will’s car glided through the streets of Baltimore, the hum of the engine a soothing backdrop to his swirling thoughts. The anticipation bubbling within him was undeniable. He was excited to see Hannibal, a feeling that had once been a constant undercurrent but now surged to the forefront with newfound clarity. The realization hit him like a wave; these feelings had been there all along, buried beneath layers of confusion and denial. Now, they rose to the surface, demanding acknowledgment.

He wondered if the same was true for Hannibal. Will’s mind drifted back to their time before the encephalitis. He replayed their interactions in his mind, scrutinizing every glance, every touch, every word. Hannibal’s emotions were a labyrinth, intricate and deceptive. Had there been genuine warmth behind those calculated moves? Or was it all just part of the grand manipulation? Trying to sift through the fog of memories and discern the truth was like trying to see through the bottom of a murky pond–difficult and, more often than not, frustratingly impossible.

Reflecting on their interactions over the past two weeks, Will couldn’t ignore the significant shift in Hannibal’s behavior. There had been moments of vulnerability that Will would never have believed Hannibal capable of. The Chesapeake Ripper, exposing himself in ways that defied his meticulously crafted persona, seemed almost human at times. Will found himself questioning whether Hannibal had changed because of him. One thing was certain: Hannibal had changed Will, irrevocably and profoundly.

As he drove, the memory of Hannibal on his knees consumed Will’s thoughts. He could still feel the searing warmth of Hannibal’s mouth, the way his tongue danced with skillful precision around his shaft. Hannibal’s eyes, darkened with lust and adoration, locked onto Will’s with an intensity that made his breath catch. The stretch of Hannibal’s lips around him, the low, hungry moans vibrating against his skin, echoed in his mind. Every eager movement, every submissive gesture, spoke volumes of his surrender. When Hannibal had whimpered at

Will's praise, it had sent shivers of raw pleasure down Will's spine, each word of approval drawing Hannibal deeper into a world where he belonged solely to Will. The memory of Hannibal's unrestrained need, his willingness to submit completely, only fueled Will's desire, making him yearn for more of those intoxicating moments together.

Will whined aloud in his car at the images flooding his brain. The vulnerability, the submission–it all seemed so real. Perhaps, in some deeply buried part of his psyche, Hannibal craved the surrender, the relinquishment of power, and it was only Will who could wield control in a way that allowed him to truly submit. The thought was both exhilarating and terrifying. It meant their dynamic was not just a power play, but a symbiotic relationship where each fulfilled a profound need in the other. When Will tightened his grip on control, Hannibal found the rare chance to let go, to trust, and to feel vulnerable, and in turn, Hannibal's submission reinforced Will's sense of autonomy and strength.

Yet, doubt gnawed at the edges of this clarity. Hannibal's genuine vulnerability now did not erase the specter of his past manipulations. Even if Hannibal was being genuine with Will now, there was no guarantee he wouldn't change his mind. Hannibal's history of manipulation loomed large, a constant reminder of how easily trust could be shattered. The memory of betrayal lingered, tainting the fragile trust they were rebuilding. Will's paranoia clung to him, whispering that Hannibal could be orchestrating another elaborate trap. After all, Hannibal had fooled him before. What if this was just a more complex deception?

The possibility that Hannibal was still playing him was surprisingly painful. It wasn't just about the betrayal; it was about the burgeoning feelings that Will could no longer deny. He was starting to feel something deep and unexpected for Hannibal–something that went beyond the intricate games they had been playing with each other. It was a genuine affection, a connection that scared him more than he cared to admit.

Will desperately wanted it to be genuine, but he had believed Hannibal's emotions were genuine before and had ended up in a mental hospital for his trouble. Now, however, things had changed between them. Will held the power; he had his monster on a leash. The sensation of regaining his autonomy, of reclaiming control that had been stripped from him, felt indescribably good. If Hannibal was playing a game, Will would remind him who he belonged to and who was in charge. Though his feelings for Hannibal were deepening in ways he hadn't anticipated, he wasn't about to let Hannibal forget who held the reins. The power dynamics had shifted, and Will intended to keep it that way, no matter what. The knowledge that he could now dictate the terms of their relationship brought a sense of satisfaction and empowerment that he was unwilling to relinquish.

Even so, a pang of guilt tugged at him. Will's original plan had been to betray Hannibal to Jack, to ensure Hannibal was imprisoned. Wasn't that exactly what Hannibal had done to him? The realization pricked at him, the irony not lost on his conflicted conscience. He had intended to manipulate Hannibal, to use their connection to bring him down. And now, he was in control, but the fear of history repeating itself loomed large. The fear that Hannibal, despite his vulnerability, was still playing a deeper game, one that could end with Will being betrayed once more.

As he mulled over these thoughts, a stark truth began to crystallize in Will's mind. He and Hannibal were exactly alike. The calculated deception, the intricate dance of predator and prey, the insidious blend of affection and manipulation–they were mirrors of each other. Will had always prided himself on being different, on being the righteous man who could delve into darkness without succumbing to it. But now, he saw that the lines were irreversibly blurred.

This newfound understanding was oddly liberating. Will had spent so much time grappling with the idea that Hannibal was a monster, something other than human. But what if they were both monsters? Not in the grotesque, exaggerated sense, but in the way they navigated their lives, driven by primal instincts and a need for control. The thought didn't bother him as much as it should have; it brought a strange sense of clarity. He realized that this connection with Hannibal, this twisted symbiosis, was a reflection of his true self.

Will's gaze drifted to the road ahead, the rhythm of the car's movement grounding him. Accepting this part of himself was both terrifying and empowering. He was no longer the naive profiler trying to fit into a world of black and white morality. He was a participant in a grand, dark dance, fully aware of the steps and willing to take them. The fear of betrayal, while still present, seemed less significant in the face of this revelation. He and Hannibal were bound by more than just their actions; they were kindred spirits in their understanding of the world.

He let out a slow breath, the weight of his realization settling over him. If he and Hannibal were alike, then perhaps this path he had chosen was the only one he could ever truly walk. It was a path fraught with danger and uncertainty, but it was also a path of self-discovery and acceptance. Will was committed, ready to face whatever came next with eyes wide open, fully embracing the darkness that had always been a part of him.

Will's thoughts were interrupted as he found himself pulling up in front of Hannibal's office. He parked his car, got out, and walked in, each step feeling like a reaffirmation of his commitment.

As Will entered Hannibal's building, the familiar opulence greeted him. He made his way to the waiting room, only to find Margot Verger already there. The last time he had seen her was the night she appeared at his house in Wolf Trap, desperate and determined. Today, Margot was impeccably dressed, a testament to her status as the Verger heir, but there was a noticeable strain to her appearance. Dark circles marred her eyes, and a tightness to her features spoke of underlying exhaustion. A brace encased her wrist, designed to blend with her outfit but unmistakable.

Will's mind flashed back to what Margot had said about her brother Mason, and the reason she was in therapy. She had tried to kill him. The gears in Will's brain began to turn, drawing parallels between Margot's struggles with her brother and his own with Hannibal.

"Will Graham. This isn't your usual appointment time," Margot observed, breaking the silence.

"It's not yours either, Margot. What are you doing here?" Will replied, his tone curious but gentle.

Margot hesitated, her eyes betraying a flicker of fear. “Something came up. I needed a session.” She was cagey, but Will could see the anxiety that gripped her.

The door to Hannibal’s office opened, and Hannibal stepped out. There was a brief pause as he registered Will’s presence, a moment of surprise flitting across his face. “Margot, I apologize for my rudeness, but would you mind if I had a quick word with Will?”

Margot nodded, her eyes lingering on Will with a hint of curiosity as she took a seat. Hannibal guided Will into his office with a gentle touch on his shoulder, the scent of his cologne–a blend of cedar and something darker–wafting over Will as they moved.

“What brings you to my office today, Will? I thought you were at Quantico all day.” Hannibal’s tone was measured, though a hint of intrigue seeped through.

“Jack asked me to bring you his notes on Tier’s disappearance and to see if you had any insight as to where Tier might have disappeared to.” Will’s voice held a steady confidence, his eyes gleaming with the shared secret they held.

They shared a knowing smirk, both fully aware of Tier’s fate. Their eyes locked, the unspoken memories of the previous night flickering between them like a dark flame. Will could almost feel the weight of Hannibal’s body pressed against his, the scent of sweat and blood still lingering in the back of his mind. Hannibal’s eyes darkened slightly, a hint of a smile playing at the corners of his mouth as if he, too, was reliving the intimate aftermath of Will’s hunt and kill.

“Of course, I can have my thoughts written up and sent to Jack by the end of day tomorrow,” Hannibal replied smoothly, his gaze unwavering, piercing into Will with an intensity that sent a shiver down his spine. “Is that all you needed?”

As he spoke, Hannibal turned and stood behind his desk, looking at Will expectantly, exuding an aura of calm authority. Will faced him, feeling the weight of Hannibal’s gaze as it seemed to penetrate his very soul. As they locked eyes, an unbidden image flashed across Will’s mind–an image of Hannibal bent over the desk, submitting to Will’s every command. The thought was vivid and charged with an erotic energy that made Will’s pulse quicken. He could almost feel the heat of Hannibal’s body beneath his hands, the sound of their breaths mingling in the charged air of the office. Will forced himself to file the image away for later, maintaining his composure, though his eyes betrayed a flicker of the desire that coursed through him.

Will’s eyes gleamed with intent. “I was hoping you would join me for dinner tomorrow evening.”

Hannibal raised an eyebrow, his curiosity piqued. “Are you suggesting something in particular?”

As Will took a step closer, he chose his words carefully, his voice low and layered with meaning. “I have a few ideas for the meat I brought you.” Will eyed Hannibal closely, wondering if he truly understood the depths of his commitment. Will had watched as

Hannibal butchered the meat–had enjoyed watching–but that wasn't the same as willingly coming to his table and eating human flesh with all pretenses stripped away.

Hannibal's expression turned contemplative, his gaze sharp. "Are you certain, Will? This particular meal is not one to be savored lightly. It requires a true understanding of our… nature."

Will met Hannibal's eyes with unwavering resolve. "I'm certain, Hannibal. This is about more than just the hunt. It's about embracing who we are, without reservation. I want us to share that experience fully." As he spoke, Will felt a surge of determination. This was his declaration, his way of showing Hannibal that he was all in, that he accepted every part of what they were.

Hannibal's lips curved into a satisfied smile. "Very well. Until tomorrow evening."

Will nodded, offering a brief farewell before turning to leave. As he stepped into the hallway, he caught Margot's eye, giving her a slight nod of acknowledgment. Walking away, he heard Hannibal's voice welcoming Margot into his office, the door closing softly behind them.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I LOVE hearing what you think and if anything in particular tickled your fancy ;)

Come find me on tumblr @graciereadshannigram, my asks are always open!!

Bound and Bonded, Part 1

Chapter Notes

hey would ya look at that, we crossed the 50k mark!! thank y'all SO much for keeping the motivation to write flowing <3

beta'd by Jay_Is_A_Rat, but I did the final pass, so all remaining mistakes are 1200% my own!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will stood in front of the mirror, a critical eye contemplating his reflection. Fresh out of the shower, he reached for a snug pair of dark jeans–the same ones he had worn to their last dinner together. He remembered how Hannibal's gaze had lingered on him that evening, hungry and feeding Will's ego, sparking a sense of confidence he had rarely felt prior to that evening. The fabric hugged his legs comfortably, worn in all the right places, yet still nice enough for the occasion. Next, he pulled on a forest green henley, the color bringing out the intensity of his blue eyes. The material was soft against his skin, hugging his chest and accentuating his musculature in a way that felt both casual and deliberate.

Satisfied with his outfit, Will turned his attention to grooming. He ran a comb through his damp hair, adding a touch of gel to tame them into submission. The curls resisted only slightly before settling into a more controlled disarray. As he cleaned up the scruff on his jawline, he noted the sharpness it added to his features, making his eyes seem even more piercing. This grooming ritual was a rare indulgence, but tonight felt special–worthy of the extra effort.

Despite his efforts to maintain a calm demeanor, a nervous energy buzzed within him. He could feel the anticipation building, a mix of excitement and anxiety. Channeling this energy, Will turned to tidying up the house. He moved through the rooms with purpose, gathering stray items and organizing them neatly. His gaze lingered on his fishing setup, a cluttered desk strewn with lines, hooks, and lures. Methodically, he arranged the tools, the familiar routine of organizing his gear providing a momentary sense of calm and control.

His primary focus, however, was the dog hair. With his pack of dogs, it was a constant battle to keep the fur under control. Armed with the vacuum from the closet, Will began methodically cleaning the living room, the low hum of the machine filling the space. He paid special attention to the couch, running the vacuum over the cushions multiple times to ensure no stray hairs remained. *Then again, I'd like to see Hannibal a little thrown by a few dog hairs.* The dogs watched him with mild curiosity, tails wagging lazily as they lounged on the freshly cleaned floor.

Will moved to the kitchen next, wiping down the counters and sweeping the floor. The smell of cleaning products mingled with the lingering scent of coffee from earlier in the day, creating a strangely comforting atmosphere. He took a moment to arrange the dining table, setting out a simple, elegant tablecloth and placing two settings across from each other. It wasn't nearly as elegant as Hannibal's dining room setup, but Will felt proud of how it looked in his little kitchen.

As he worked, Will couldn't help but think about the dinner ahead. His mind wandered to the conversations they might have, the unspoken emotions that would undoubtedly surface. There was a mix of excitement and nervousness bubbling within him, a blend of anticipation and the desire to make everything perfect for Hannibal. He felt a surge of clarity amidst the nervous energy, a firm decision taking root within him: Hannibal was absolutely his way forward, no matter what happened. Will had committed to following his instincts, embracing the path they led him down, and he was determined to see where this journey would take them.

The sound of a car engine outside interrupted his thoughts. Will glanced out the window, spotting Hannibal's sleek Bentley pulling up to the house. His heart skipped a beat, a surge of excitement mingling with anticipation. He watched as Hannibal gracefully exited the vehicle, collecting bags from the trunk. Will took a deep breath, mentally readying himself for Hannibal's arrival. Seeing the man, always so composed and meticulous, brought a wave of calm over him, yet it also heightened his anticipation.

Will finished wiping down the counter, tossing the dishrag into the laundry room before heading to the door. As he opened it, their eyes met, and they exchanged warm smiles. At that moment, Will was struck by how normal this felt–like a regular date. It was a comforting realization, and it eased some of his nervous energy.

"Let me take some of that off your hands," Will offered, reaching out to relieve Hannibal of some of the burden. Their fingers brushed as Hannibal handed him the cooler bag, a small yet intimate exchange that made Will's pulse quicken just a bit.

"Thank you, Will," Hannibal replied with a slight nod, setting the remaining bags down. As he took off his coat, Will's eyes widened slightly in surprise. Hannibal was dressed more casually than usual, at least as casual as Will ever saw him. He wore slacks and a dress shirt with the top button undone, revealing a hint of his collarbone and making him look unexpectedly relaxed.

The casual attire highlighted Hannibal's lean frame, the fabric of the shirt hugging his body in a way that was both refined and subtly suggestive. Will's gaze lingered on the exposed skin at Hannibal's collar, a tantalizing glimpse of his smooth flesh. The shirt clung just right to his torso, accentuating the lines of his muscles. Will couldn't help but appreciate how the normally formal Hannibal appeared almost vulnerable in his more relaxed clothing. The sight stirred something deep within Will, a mix of admiration and a more carnal urge.

The usual layers of formality were stripped away, revealing a more approachable, yet no less alluring, side of Hannibal. This rare glimpse into a different aspect of his persona made Will's heart skip a beat, knowing he was special, knowing that nobody else saw Hannibal like this.

The sight of Hannibal, vulnerable and soft, awakened a profound and powerful mix of longing and possessiveness. This Hannibal was *his* , and his alone.

Desire surged in his veins, and he envisioned pressing Hannibal against the kitchen counter, feeling the heat of his body through the thin fabric of his shirt, kissing that exposed collarbone, tasting the salt of his skin. The fantasy was almost overwhelming, the desire to dominate and cherish Hannibal in equal measure pulsing through him with an intensity that made his breath hitch.

Will shook his head slightly, pulling himself back to the present. He offered Hannibal a warm smile, trying to mask the hunger in his eyes. “You look good,” he said, his voice tinged with genuine appreciation.

Hannibal raised an eyebrow, a smile playing on his lips. “I thought I might dress down for the occasion,” he replied, a hint of teasing in his tone.

Will chuckled softly, his eyes not leaving Hannibal’s. “You wear it well.”

Before they could move to the kitchen, Will’s dogs came trotting over, tails wagging enthusiastically as they sniffed at the guest in their home. Hannibal, ever composed, crouched down gracefully and greeted each dog with gentle pats and murmured words. “Hello, Winston. You’ve been taking good care of Will, haven’t you?” he said, scratching behind the dog’s ears. “And you, Buster, still as curious as ever. And Sasha, you’re as charming as your namesake.”

Will’s heart squeezed at the plain affection in Hannibal’s tone. It was clear that Hannibal’s tenderness extended beyond just Will, reaching into the simple, loyal hearts of his dogs. Watching Hannibal interact with them so naturally, Will felt a warmth spread through him, mingling with the already complex emotions Hannibal stirred within him.

“I’m surprised you like my dogs so much,” Will commented, unable to hide the softness in his voice.

Hannibal scoffed lightly, his eyes crinkling with amusement. “Will, I’ve always believed that a person’s relationship with animals speaks volumes about their character. Your dogs are loyal, intelligent, and discerning. Much like their owner.”

Will couldn’t help but smile at the compliment, even if it was wrapped in Hannibal’s typical refined manner. “Well, they seem to like you too. That’s a good sign.”

As they moved to the kitchen, the dogs followed them, the playful atmosphere shifting into a comfortable rhythm. The kitchen, with its rustic charm and warm lighting, seemed to embrace them as they began unpacking the groceries. The wooden beams overhead and the scent of aged wood created an ambiance that was both cozy and intimate.

Will set the cooler bag down on the counter, taking a peek inside. The carefully wrapped cuts of meat caught his eye, and he looked up at Hannibal with a playful grin. “So, what’s the meat tonight?” he asked, his tone light.

Hannibal met his gaze, a trace of something deep and complex in his eyes. “Long pig,” he replied, his voice smooth and deliberate. The words hung in the air, charged with a meaning that transcended the literal and took the mood from light to heavy. Will’s playful expression faltered slightly, replaced by a serious curiosity as the weight of Hannibal’s words settled over him.

Will sensed the gravity behind Hannibal’s response, the careful way he watched for his reaction. There was an uncertainty in Hannibal’s demeanor as he gauged whether Will was truly ready to share this part of his world. The slight tension in Hannibal’s shoulders, the way his eyes searched Will’s face, all spoke of a cautious hope that Will would understand and accept.

Will’s eyes softened as he looked at Hannibal, his voice carrying a quiet reassurance. “I’ve always enjoyed eating at your table, Hannibal. That hasn’t changed. That *won’t* change,” he emphasized.

Hannibal’s posture eased, the slight tension that had been coiled in his shoulders releasing just a fraction. The corners of his mouth lifted in a small, almost imperceptible smile, but it was his eyes that truly revealed his relief and appreciation.

Will stepped closer, the distance between them shrinking to a mere breath. He could feel the warmth radiating from Hannibal’s body, the intimacy of their shared breath creating an electric tension between them. The aroma of fresh ingredients began to fill the space, mingling pleasantly with the faint hint of Hannibal’s cologne.

“I’m glad to hear that,” Hannibal murmured, his voice throaty and rich. His fingers brushed against Will’s as they reached for the cooler bag at the same time, the contact sending a small frisson through them both. There was a vulnerability in Hannibal’s eyes, an openness that spoke volumes. He wasn’t just talking about the food; he was talking about their connection, their shared understanding of who they were and what they were capable of.

Will paused, a gentle realization washing over him with warmth. Hannibal’s openness, the way he allowed himself to be vulnerable–to be *seen* –only with him, made Will feel something deeper, something more profound. It made him feel cherished in a way he had never experienced before. The thought of Hannibal trusting him with his true self, unguarded and sincere, stirred a sense of belonging and affection. Will felt his heart swell, a whisper of… *not love* , Will shoved the thought away, but it still sparked within him, grounding him in the moment.

Will’s lips curved into a smile as he squeezed Hannibal’s hand briefly before letting go. He turned his attention to the cooler bag, pulling out the meat with a deliberate slowness, as if to show Hannibal that he was unafraid, that he was fully committed to this shared experience. The cooler bag was heavy, its contents wrapped carefully, and Will placed it on the counter with a sense of veneration.

Hannibal watched Will with an intensity that bordered on adoration. “Cooking together is a different kind of intimacy, don’t you think?” he asked, his voice a soft caress.

Will nodded, his gaze meeting Hannibal's. "It is," he agreed. "It's about trust, about sharing something deeply personal."

Hannibal's eyes gleamed with a mixture of pride and affection. "Exactly. And tonight, we share more than just a meal."

Will felt a rush at Hannibal's words, the sincerity and depth of feeling behind them. He reached for the knife, ready to begin the preparation, but not before placing a gentle kiss on Hannibal's cheek. "I'm with you, Hannibal. In this, and in everything."

Hannibal's eyes warmed at the gesture, a smile playing on his lips. He turned to the array of ingredients spread out before them, the anticipation of the culinary creation ahead palpable in the air. "What are we making tonight?" Will asked, his tone a mix of curiosity and eagerness.

"We'll be preparing sweetbread ravioli in a sage butter sauce," Hannibal began, his voice taking on the familiar cadence of a teacher sharing his craft. "To pair with that, we'll enjoy a pinot noir from Burgundy. The dish will be rich and savory, the wine complementing it with its bright acidity and earthy undertones."

Will couldn't resist the opportunity to poke fun at Hannibal. "Only one course? Isn't that a little pedestrian for you?" he teased, a playful glint in his eyes.

Hannibal's smile widened, his eyes twinkling with amusement. "There is dessert, naturally," he replied smoothly. "But a meal does not need multiple courses to be meaningful. It is the experience, the connection shared over the food, that imbues it with significance. We make our own meaning."

As Hannibal began to explain the dish, his tone took on a reverent quality. "Each ingredient is chosen with care, each step in the process is deliberate. The sweetbreads, for example, represent a transformation–an otherwise humble ingredient elevated to something exquisite through skill and intention. The sage butter sauce adds a layer of richness, grounding the dish with its earthy aroma."

Will listened intently, his eyes following Hannibal's every movement and gesture. There was a depth to Hannibal's explanation, one that Will knew went beyond mere culinary technique and meticulous preparation. "The pinot noir, with its earthy and herbal notes will balance out the rich flavors of the ravioli. If one element overpowers the others, the dish becomes unbalanced, and the intended harmony is lost," Hannibal continued, his voice imbued with a subtle reverence. "Each flavor enhances the other, creating a synergy that is greater than the sum of its parts."

As Hannibal spoke, Will was nearly overwhelmed with the depth of emotion behind Hannibal's words. The way Hannibal described the ingredients and their significance made it clear that this was no simple meal–it was a show of devotion, an act of worship. Will watched as Hannibal's hands moved with graceful precision, his fingers deftly handling each ingredient. Will's gaze lingered on those hands, appreciating the care and intention behind every movement. The rhythm of Hannibal's actions, the methodical way he prepared the meal, spoke of a man who found solace and expression in his craft.

Hannibal's eyes never left Will's as he continued. "Cooking for someone is an intimate act, a way to express what words often cannot."

Will understood the gravity of what Hannibal was trying to tell him, and the intensity of his gaze and the sincerity lacing his voice made Will's heart pound. He felt a mix of emotions– awe, confusion, and an overwhelming sense of responsibility. Was this how Hannibal had always felt? The strength of Hannibal's emotions, usually so well controlled and hidden, was almost too much to bear.

Will's instincts swelled with the urge to gather Hannibal close, a voice in the back of his mind whispering for his mate– *wait, mate?* Will thought, only mildly alarmed at the instinctual urge to claim. This realization brought a surge of protectiveness and possessiveness. But Will knew he had to keep his composure. For now. Shaking his head to focus on the task at hand and taking a deep breath, Will asked, "And for dessert?"

"Ah, for dessert, we'll be indulging in a red wine flan with a sweet ice wine to accompany it," Hannibal explained, refocusing on explaining the meal to come. His voice took on a tone of deep appreciation as he described the dessert. "The flan will be rich and velvety, infused with the deep, robust flavors of the red wine, and garnished with a touch of mint to add a refreshing note. The ice wine, with its luscious sweetness, will provide a delightful contrast, enhancing the experience with its complexity."

As Hannibal spoke, Will could envision the dish, the delicate balance of flavors and textures coming together in a harmonious blend. He felt a surge of admiration for Hannibal's passion and expertise, the artistry that he brought to every meal.

They began cooking together, moving in a synchronized dance around the kitchen. Will chopped vegetables with precise, measured strokes, while Hannibal expertly handled the meat, his hands moving with practiced grace. The dogs, sensing the calm energy between the two men, settled down at their feet, their tails wagging contentedly. The kitchen was alive with a quiet hum, the sounds of their movements blending seamlessly with the ambient noise of the house.

Hannibal's voice carried softly through the room as he explained the steps of their meal. "We'll start with the sweetbread ravioli. The key is to make sure the filling is perfectly seasoned," he said, his tone both instructive and intimate. Will nodded, absorbing every word, feeling a sense of ease he rarely experienced.

As they worked, the rich aromas of cooking filled the air, mingling with the earthy scent of sage and the faint sweetness of butter browning in the pan. Will found himself drawn to Hannibal's side, their bodies occasionally brushing against each other in the confined space. Each touch sent a spark of electricity through him, making it difficult to concentrate.

Hannibal's hands moved with a fluid elegance, guiding Will through the process of folding the ravioli dough. "You see, the dough must be thin enough to let the filling shine through, but strong enough to hold it together," he murmured, his breath warm near Will's temple. Will's pulse quickened, his hands remaining steady despite the growing anticipation thrumming through him.

The quiet rhythm of their work was punctuated by moments of shared laughter and soft conversation. Will marveled at the ease with which they moved together, the harmony of their actions reflecting the unspoken bond between them. As they prepared the meal, he felt a sense of contentment and purpose, knowing that this simple act of cooking was a testament to the trust and affection that had grown between them.

The dogs, ever-present and attentive, watched with keen eyes, their tails thumping softly against the floor. The calm energy in the room seemed to envelop them, creating an atmosphere of warmth and familiarity. Will glanced down at his furry companions, a smile tugging at his lips as he noticed their peaceful demeanor.

Will found himself aching for this kind of domesticity with an intensity that surprised him. He had long accepted a life of solitude, believing his only companions would be his loyal dogs. The idea of sharing his home, his space, with another person had seemed foreign, unattainable. He had convinced himself he was content with that, with the quiet loneliness that had settled into his bones. He hadn't known any better, had never allowed himself to imagine more.

Yet, here he was, the soft glow of the kitchen lights casting a warm halo around Hannibal as they moved together in a seamless dance. The occasional brush of their hands sent electric shivers down his spine, each touch speaking of a connection that went beyond the physical. It was in the way Hannibal's eyes would meet his, a silent conversation passing between them, and in the comfortable silence that filled the room, heavy with unspoken understanding.

As they continued to cook, Will felt a sense of contentment he hadn't known was possible. The rhythmic chopping, the sizzle of ingredients hitting the hot pan, and the mingling scents created a symphony of domestic bliss that resonated deep within him. He found himself appreciating not just the process, but the company, the shared experience of creating something together.

This was a new kind of intimacy, one that wasn't born out of necessity or survival, but out of choice and desire. It was in the small, subtle moments–the way Hannibal's hand would linger on his a second longer than necessary, the way their bodies would align perfectly as they moved around the kitchen, the way Hannibal's voice would soften when he spoke to him. It was in these moments that Will realized how much he had craved this.

Will's mind raced with the implications of this realization, his heart pounding in his chest. Could he truly trust Hannibal? Could he allow himself to be this open, this exposed? The fear of being hurt, of being betrayed, loomed large, but there was also a burgeoning sense of trust, a belief that Hannibal, despite his dark past, was committed to this shared journey.

The scent of sage butter filled the air, mingling with the rich aroma of sweetbread ravioli as Hannibal set the plates on the table. Dancing candlelight cast a warm glow over the room, illuminating the delicate presentation of their meal. Will's gaze lingered on the scene, the serene domesticity that had always been so elusive now within his grasp. He relished the moment, marveling at how he had found this comfort with Hannibal, of all people.

When Hannibal was seated, eyes locked on Will expectantly, Will took a bite, the ravioli's delicate texture and savory filling bursting with flavor, perfectly complemented by the fragrant sage butter. The richness of the sweetbread melded harmoniously with the delicate sweetness of the sauce just as Hannibal had promised, the blend of flavors dancing on his palate.

Will poured himself and Hannibal another glass of wine with practiced ease, the rich red swirling in the candlelight. liquid catching the light as it splashed into the glass. Settling further back in his seat, he watched Hannibal take his own first bite of the meal, followed by a sip of wine.

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"This is exquisite," Hannibal remarked, his voice filled with genuine appreciation. "The flavors are perfectly balanced."

Will took another bite himself, savoring the complex blend of tastes. "You surpassed yourself again," he said, nodding in agreement. "The sauce has an incredible depth."

Hannibal smiled, a glint of pride in his eyes. "It's the quality of the ingredients," he said modestly, though his eyes crinkled with pleasure.

After a few moments of comfortable silence, Will took another sip of wine and leaned forward slightly. "I was surprised to see Margot at your office yesterday," Will commented casually, his eyes fixed on Hannibal.

Hannibal glanced up, a slight smile playing on his lips. "Is now the time you tell me about her visit with you?" he asked, his tone light yet curious.

Will took a slow sip of his wine, savoring the burn as it slid down his throat. He followed with another bite of the ravioli, appreciating the way the flavors melded together in perfect harmony. "She's… intriguing," he began, his eyes narrowing thoughtfully. "She showed up at my door with a bottle of whiskey and wanted a character reference for you, patient to patient."

Hannibal's smile widened with amusement, his eyebrows slightly raised in interest as he took a sip of his wine. "And what did you tell her?" he inquired, setting down his glass and continuing to eat, his hands moving with elegant precision.

Will's gaze lingered on Hannibal, appreciating the elegance of his movements even in something as mundane as eating. "I told her that it depends on what you're in therapy for," he said, a wry snort slipping from his mouth. He took a bite of his ravioli, the rich flavors melding perfectly on his tongue.

Will took another sip of his wine, the acidic flavor grounding him as he let his thoughts wander. Hannibal was a great therapist if you're trying to unlock murderous urges–of that, he had no doubt. But beyond that? He couldn't say. He wouldn't know. After all, he was never

officially a patient. Their sessions had always been unorthodox, far removed from any conventional therapeutic relationship.

Hannibal's lips curved up into a smile, his eyes studying Will with that familiar, penetrating gaze. He likely could guess what was running through Will's mind. "How did dear Margot strike you?" he asked, his voice smooth and inviting, as he cut another piece of ravioli.

Will paused, considering his words carefully. He swirled the wine in his glass, watching the dark liquid catch the light before taking a sip. The warmth spread through him, giving him a moment of clarity. "There's a depth of pain in her that's hard to miss," he finally replied, his voice thoughtful and tinged with a hint of empathy.

Hannibal's smile remained, a hint of something deeper behind his eyes. "Pain often leads us to unexpected places, does it not?" His tone was layered, and Will knew that he was referencing not just Margot's pain but the profound agony he had put Will through, and the pain Will had inflicted in return.

Will nodded slowly, the unspoken history between them adding weight to Hannibal's observation as he set his fork down. "Yes, it does," he admitted, his voice soft but resolute. "Pain changes us, drives us to places we never thought we'd go." He met Hannibal's gaze, the intensity between them thick, each word laced with the shared experiences that had brought them to this moment. The memory of their mutual betrayals lingered in the air, but there was also a burgeoning sense of understanding.

Will shifted slightly in his seat, bringing the conversation back to Margot. "She mentioned her brother. Mason Verger. The way she talked about him… there's something more there, isn't there?" His tone was rhetorical, his empathy having already picked up on the sinister undertones in Margot's relationship with her brother. Margot's hints had been far from subtle. He simply wanted to hear what Hannibal had to say. Picking his fork back up, he cut a piece of ravioli, enjoying the richness as he spoke, the flavors providing a comforting backdrop to the dark topic.

Hannibal's expression darkened slightly, a flicker of something like disdain crossing his face. "Mason is… unique," he said, his voice controlled. "A man of considerable wealth and influence, but his tastes run towards the perverse." The fact that Hannibal, with his own dark inclinations, would describe someone as perverse, spoke volumes to Will. "His relationship with Margot is complex, to say the least."

Will poured another glass of wine, the liquid swirling in the dim light of the kitchen. He leaned back in his chair, his gaze sharp. "Complex?" He snorted, a wry smile tugging at his lips. "I think 'abusive' might be more appropriate."

Hannibal tilted his head in acknowledgment. "The two are not mutually exclusive. It is both complex and abusive. Margot's struggle for independence, especially in the wake of their father's death, is a direct threat to Mason's control. And Mason does not take kindly to threats." Hannibal's tone was measured, each word carefully chosen, but there was an underlying current of disdain.

“Which makes him a danger to Margot,” Will surmised, his voice steady yet edged with concern.

“Mason is a danger to anyone who stands in his way,” Hannibal agreed, his voice carrying a dark edge. “His cruelty knows few bounds. Margot’s resilience is commendable, but I fear it may not be enough to protect her.”

A sharp flare of jealousy and possessiveness surged through Will at the genuine concern in Hannibal’s voice for Margot. It was irrational, he knew, but the intensity of his feelings caught him off guard. The idea of Hannibal caring deeply for anyone else gnawed at him, unsettling his newfound sense of security. He clenched his jaw, forcing himself to stay composed. Will tried to remind himself that his own concern for Margot mirrored Hannibal’s, but the possessiveness lingered, a dark whisper in his mind. He shoved it aside for now, resolving to deal with the unsettling emotion later, as the need to remain focused on the present moment took precedence.

Nevertheless, Will’s grip tightened slightly around his fork as his lips curled into a sneer. “Mason sounds like a pig.”

Hannibal’s eyes gleamed with a hint of something darker, something almost predatory. “He may yet be dealt with as one,” he said softly, his words hanging in the air like a promise. He took a measured sip of wine, and Will basked in the sight of blood red on Hannibal’s lips.

They both turned back to their plates, the weight of their conversation lingering but giving way to the familiar rhythms of eating. The tension of their discussion about Mason seemed to meld seamlessly into the more immediate, tangible pleasure of enjoying their food. The clink of cutlery against plates and the rich flavors of the meal provided a comforting backdrop, grounding them as the conversation flowed onto lighter topics.

The remnants of dinner were cleared away, leaving only the promise of dessert to conclude the evening. Hannibal moved with his usual grace, his presence a steady, calming force. Will watched him for a moment, appreciating the ease with which they worked together. He stepped closer, ready to assist with the final touches of their dessert, the anticipation of the next course adding a light thrill to the air.

Will broke the silence, his tone lighter, almost playful. “Is there anything I can do to help?”

Hannibal glanced at him, a slight smile tugging at the corner of his mouth. The appearance of that smile made Will’s heart skip a beat. It was a rare, genuine smile, one that seemed to appear only when they were alone together, away from the masks they wore for the world. It was a reminder of the unique bond they shared, a glimpse into the Hannibal that existed only for him.

“Impatient, are we?” Hannibal teased, his eyes twinkling with amusement.

Will rolled his eyes playfully, a smirk forming on his lips. “Maybe, what if I am?” he retorted, his tone light yet challenging.

Hannibal's smile widened, a deep, rich chuckle escaping his throat. "Then perhaps I should indulge you," he replied, his voice dripping with affection and mischief. "But first, would you mind helping me julienne the mint?" His tone turned smooth and intimate. "It's the last touch we need for the flan. A final flourish to complete our meal."

Will saw an opportunity and couldn't resist the chance to ruffle Hannibal's composure. He moved closer, deliberately brushing against Hannibal as he reached for the mint. He smirked inwardly as he confessed, "I'm not sure I know how to do that." His voice was a murmur, low and teasing. The new proximity allowed him to feel the heat radiating from Hannibal's body, the faint ripple of muscles under his dress shirt. Will could sense the underlying tension in Hannibal, the small intake of breath as their bodies touched, and he relished the moment, enjoying the push and pull of power and intimacy between them.

"Will you show me how?" Of course, Will did know how–just because he didn't often cook for himself didn't mean he was completely useless. But he was curious to see what Hannibal would do. Just as Hannibal had orchestrated intricate scenarios to see how Will would react, Will now found himself engineering a small, intimate experiment of his own. His desire to control Hannibal, even in such small ways, was a silent assertion of his dominance–Hannibal just wasn't aware of that. The thought amused and aroused him, a reminder of how deeply intertwined their minds were, both driven by a hunger for understanding and connection.

Hannibal's eyes sparkled with a mixture of amusement and curiosity. "It's quite simple, really. Let me demonstrate," he replied, his voice taking on a low, intimate tone.

Gotcha, Will thought, barely restraining a smirk.

Hannibal stepped up behind Will, his body radiating warmth that enveloped Will like a soft, intimate embrace. Hannibal's chest pressed lightly against Will's back, a steady and comforting presence. As Hannibal guided Will's hands to stack the mint leaves, he shifted closer, their hips slotting together in a deliberate tease. The firm pressure of Hannibal's hips against his own sent a jolt of electricity through Will, making his pulse quicken. Will's mind raced with a mix of thoughts and desires–part of him wanted to focus on the task at hand, but another part couldn't ignore the tantalizing proximity of Hannibal's body. The sensation of being guided so intimately, the feel of Hannibal's breath on his ear, and the steady, confident movements of his hands created a heady cocktail of anticipation and longing.

"First, you need to stack the mint leaves," Hannibal murmured, his breath hot against Will's ear. "Then roll them tightly, like this."

Will suppressed a shiver as Hannibal's breath ghosted across his ear. Hannibal's hands moved with deliberate slowness, ensuring Will felt every movement. Hannibal's fingers guiding his own was distracting– *good thing I already know how to do this* , Will thought, *otherwise I would be fucked.* The intimate pressure was making it hard to focus on anything but the man behind him. Together, they rolled the mint into a tight cylinder.

The tension mounted with each careful movement, the air thick with their unspoken desire. Will's breath hitched as Hannibal's hips pressed more insistently against him, a reminder of the shifting power dynamics between them. Will allowed Hannibal this moment of control, indulging in the sensation of being guided, knowing that beneath the surface he was the one

pulling the strings. Each small gesture was charged with intent, leaving Will yearning for more. The boundary between task and tease blurred, the act itself becoming unimportant.

“Now, hold the roll firmly with one hand, and with the other, make thin, even slices,” Hannibal continued, his tone a seductive murmur, bringing Will back to the task.

Will allowed Hannibal to move his hands, slicing through the mint with precise, even strokes. The knife glided effortlessly under Hannibal’s guidance, each slice a delicate whisper against the cutting board. Will’s fingers brushed against Hannibal’s, the contact sending shivers down his spine.

“I think I’ve got it now,” Will said, his voice husky. He turned his head, their lips nearly brushing against each other. Will could feel his pulse quicken, the air between them heavy with the electricity of unfulfilled desire. Every inch closer felt like an eternity, the space between them alive with possibility. The heat of Hannibal’s breath on his skin, the tantalizing proximity of their mouths–it was a moment suspended in time, charged with anticipation and unspoken promises.

Just as Hannibal made to close the distance between their lips, Will broke the tension with a grin, the corners of his mouth curling up in a way that sent a spark of mischief through the air. Stepping away without a word, he took the knife from Hannibal’s hand and expertly julienned the mint, his movements swift and precise. The leaves fell into perfect, thin ribbons, each slice a testament to his skill. Will’s eyes gleamed with playful triumph as he finished, his grin widening at Hannibal’s reaction.

Hannibal raised an eyebrow, his composed mask slipping just enough to reveal a flash of surprise. He chuckled softly, a rich, deep sound that resonated through the room. “You knew how to do it all along,” he said, admiration and amusement mingling in his voice.

Will’s grin remained, his eyes never leaving Hannibal’s. “I wanted to see what would happen,” he admitted, his tone light but layered with deeper meaning. The playful darkness in his gaze matched the hunger he saw reflected in Hannibal’s eyes.

“Wind me up and watch me go?” Hannibal’s voice was a soft purr, a hint of challenge threading through his words.

Will’s grin widened, his gaze flicking down to Hannibal’s groin and then back up again, filling his words with innuendo. “I’d say you look pretty… wound up.” The deliberate sweep of his eyes, the slight lift of his eyebrows, and the teasing lilt in his voice left no doubt about his meaning.

Hannibal’s eyes darkened, the playful edge giving way to something more primal. The air between them thickened, charged with the electric anticipation of what might come next. Will felt a rush of satisfaction; he had succeeded in riling Hannibal up, and now he was witnessing the results.

Hannibal’s eyes never left Will’s as he took the julienned mint and delicately sprinkled it over the flan. The fresh, green ribbons contrasted beautifully with the rich, deep red of the wine-infused dessert. Will watched, mesmerized by the precision and care in Hannibal’s

movements, the way his fingers danced with practiced grace. The scent of mint mingled with the sweetness of the flan, creating a tantalizing aroma that filled the room.

They moved to the dining table, the candlelight casting a warm, golden glow over their faces. Hannibal placed a piece of flan on each plate, the red wine sauce pooling around the base in a way that looked both elegant and indulgent. Will's gaze flicked between the dessert and Hannibal, his heart thumping with the unspoken connection that seemed to weave tighter with every shared glance and word.

Will picked up his fork and took a small bite, the cool, creamy texture melting on his tongue. The flavor was a blend of sweetness and complexity, the red wine adding a depth that was almost intoxicating. The mint provided a fresh, unexpected burst, perfectly balancing the richness of the flan. He closed his eyes for a moment, savoring the intricate play of flavors, the way each ingredient played its part in creating something extraordinary.

Across the table, Hannibal watched him intently, a satisfied smile tugging at his lips. "Do you like it?" he asked, his voice soft and intimate, as if they were sharing a secret.

Will opened his eyes, meeting Hannibal's gaze. "It's incredible," he replied, his tone filled with genuine appreciation. He took another bite, slower this time, letting the flavors linger. "You've outdone yourself."

Hannibal's smile widened, his eyes gleaming with pleasure. "I'm glad you think so," he said, his voice a soft purr. The flirtatious undertone in his words caused an uptick in Will's pulse, the air between them charged with a mixture of playfulness and desire. As they continued to enjoy their dessert, the room seemed to shrink around them, the outside world fading away, leaving only the two of them in their private, deliciously intimate bubble.

As they finished their dessert, the comfortable rhythm of the evening continued into the task of cleaning up. Will stood, collecting their plates and bringing them to the sink. Hannibal followed suit, his movements as graceful and deliberate as always. They worked together rinsing dishes and placing them into the dishwasher. The clinking of cutlery and the gentle swish of running water provided a soothing backdrop to their shared domesticity.

Will wiped down the counters, the scent of mint and red wine still lingering in the air. He glanced at Hannibal, who was drying the last of the glasses, their eyes meeting in a moment of quiet connection. The intimate act of cleaning up together felt as meaningful as any conversation they had shared, a testament to the growing bond between them. There was a sense of partnership, of unity, that made Will's heart swell with an unexpected warmth.

With the kitchen now spotless, Hannibal placed the dish towel neatly on the counter and turned to Will, a soft smile playing on his lips. "Shall we retire to the living room?" he suggested, his voice carrying a hint of anticipation. Will nodded, feeling a flutter of excitement at the prospect of extending their evening together. The thought of a nightcap, a chance to unwind and enjoy each other's company in the shimmering firelight, was irresistibly appealing.

Entering the living room, Will moved to a nearby cabinet, retrieving a bottle of fine whiskey and two glasses. He poured them each a generous measure, the amber liquid catching the light as it filled the glasses.

After handing Hannibal a glass of whiskey, Will knelt by the fireplace in his living room, carefully arranging the logs and kindling. The crackle of the growing flames filled the room with a comforting warmth, casting flickering shadows that danced on the walls. Hannibal sat on the couch, observing him with a calm, composed demeanor, a glass of whiskey cradled in his hand.

“You seem more… settled this evening, Will,” Hannibal observed, breaking Will out of his concentration, his voice a low murmur that matched the ambiance.

Will considered that as he coaxed the fire to life, the smell of burning wood mingling with the earthy scent of the room. Hannibal wasn’t wrong; he did feel more settled. The turmoil that once roiled within him had quieted, replaced by a steady rhythm that aligned with his deeper desires. The constant tension, the relentless fight against his own nature, had subsided. “Following my instincts has been good for me,” he admitted, feeling the truth of his words. He no longer felt at war with himself; the internal conflicts had eased, leaving a clearer sense of purpose.

Hannibal smiled, a knowing glint in his eyes. “You look beautiful when you’re following your instincts,” he remarked, his gaze lingering on Will’s face with an intensity that sent a shiver down Will’s spine. The hint of innuendo in Hannibal’s tone made Will’s eyes flutter shut, heat rising to his cheeks as the meaning behind the compliment settled between them. The warmth from the fire mirrored the warmth that spread through Will, the sense of connection between them deepening in the quiet of the evening.

Will met Hannibal’s gaze, feeling a rush of conflicting emotions. “I feel… comfortable. Like this. With you.” He chewed his words carefully, each one a struggle against the weight of their shared history. “Even if I didn’t realize it at the time, I think this is what I wanted with you. Before.”

Hannibal’s eyes gleamed as he took a measured sip of whiskey, the rich flavor evident in his contented expression. “Those who perceive a lack of control in their lives often retreat into fantasies where they wield absolute power and autonomy,” he mused, his tone philosophical, the words rolling off his tongue with the same deliberate grace as he savored the wine.

Will shook his head, frustration bubbling up as Hannibal purposefully misunderstood him. He walked over to the couch, the fire’s glow casting a warm light on his face, and sat down beside Hannibal. “You’re wrong, and you know it, Hannibal. It wasn’t power or control I was after. What I wanted was this,” Will gestured vaguely around them, toward the kitchen, at the fireplace, and the intimacy. “It was the connection, the feeling of being known and seen, that drew me to you,” Will continued, the firelight glinting in his eyes.

Will paused, the bitterness of old wounds surfacing as he continued. “But how could I have known that’s what I wanted when you let me suffer with my brain on fire? When you stood by and watched me unravel, believing you were the only one who could help me but refusing to do so?” His voice grew tighter, edged with the pain of betrayal.

And that was the core of Will's feelings. He had trusted Hannibal in a way he had trusted no one else. He had allowed himself to be vulnerable, to open up and trust. And Hannibal had used that trust against him, had let him drown in his own madness while standing just close enough to offer a false sense of security.

He gestured again, more emphatically this time, around the living room and the cozy, intimate setting around them, allowing the hurt to color his tone. "This is what I wanted, Hannibal. Not the power plays or the manipulation. Just this–the quiet comfort of domesticity, the sense of having someone who truly understands and accepts me. The games we play now might be part of us, but it's not what I sought from the beginning. I wanted to feel at peace, and I thought I could find that with you."

Will settled back into the couch cushions, the fire casting warm shadows around them, enveloping them in an intimate warmth. Hannibal's eyes remained pinned on Will, a silent observer to Will's turmoil.

"And now?" Hannibal's question was a quiet probe, his eyes searching Will's face.

Will, leaning forward once more, set his whiskey down on the low coffee table, the clink of glass on wood punctuating the gravity of his thoughts. "My feelings are… complicated," he began, his voice steady but tinged with uncertainty. Will took a deep breath, his mind racing to make sense of the torrent of emotions within him. "This newfound power, this autonomy… It's exhilarating. For the first time, I feel like I'm steering my own ship." His voice wavered slightly, betraying the undercurrent of doubt. "But there are shadows too. Your history of manipulation… it looms over me. I can't help but fear that you're still playing a deeper game, one that I can't see until it's too late."

Hannibal's gaze remained intense, but Will saw slight tightening of his jaw, an almost imperceptible shift in his posture as he absorbed Will's words.

"And I find myself wanting this more and more," Will confessed, his fingers tracing the edge of his glass absentmindedly. "I didn't expect to feel this way for you–again–but here I am. And yet, my instincts are still on high alert. It's like I'm always waiting for the other shoe to drop, waiting to be betrayed again."

The fire crackled softly, filling the silence that followed with a comforting, ambient noise. Will's gaze dropped to his hands, clenched in his lap, the weight of his words hanging heavy in the air. Hannibal's expression shifted slightly, giving Will another glimpse of vulnerability. "Your instincts are in conflict," he observed, his tone thoughtful.

Will nodded, the words coming more easily now. "On the one hand, they tell me not to trust you. After everything that's happened, it would be foolish to let my guard down completely. But on the other hand… Hannibal, I've never known myself as well as I do when I'm with you. There's a clarity, a sense of understanding that I can't find anywhere else."

Hannibal's eyes widened slightly, his breath hitching at Will's confession. He leaned back, a rare softness in his gaze, his eyes never leaving Will's. Will could see the impact of his words, the subtle shift in Hannibal's posture, the way his lips parted as if to respond but no

sound came out immediately. The moment was charged with an unspoken emotion that made Will's heart beat faster.

"Then perhaps now you can truly understand why I pushed you the way I did," Hannibal finally said, his voice steady but with an underlying current of intensity that spoke volumes.

Will's jaw tightened, his gaze sharp. "I've always understood why you did it, Hannibal," he replied, his voice edged with intensity. "First, it was self-preservation. I was getting too close, and at that point, you knew I would have turned you in. It would have cost you your life, your freedom." He paused, the memory of those days still fresh and raw.

Hannibal's expression remained unreadable, but Will could sense the tension in the air, the unspoken acknowledgment of the truth in his words. He continued, his tone hardening. "Second, you were craving understanding and acceptance, and you saw me as the only person capable of providing that. You needed me to see you, to know you, in a way that no one else ever could."

Will paused, feeling a deep, unsettling resonance with his own words. The insight into Hannibal's psyche mirrored his own desires, bringing about a stark realization. He craved the same understanding and acceptance from Hannibal–the need to be truly seen and known. This realization wasn't just intellectual; it was visceral, a raw and intimate truth that tightened his chest and quickened his pulse. The intensity of his emotions washed over him, a blend of yearning and fear, knowing that in many ways, they were two sides of the same coin, each seeking solace and recognition in the other.

Will's hands clenched into fists in his lap, his knuckles whitening as he leaned forward. "But understanding didn't make the betrayal hurt any less," he said, his voice dropping to a low, almost dangerous whisper. "Knowing why you did it didn't temper my anger. If anything, it made it worse."

Hannibal's eyes narrowed and his breathing picked up in speed. "Are you still angry, Will?" he asked, the tension in his voice betraying the calm he tried to project.

Will reflected on his complicated feelings, his brow furrowing. "I'm not angry anymore," he admitted, his voice tinged with a mix of sadness and relief. "I wish I could be. It would be a lot easier to deal with you if I was still angry."

He paused again, gathering his thoughts. "When I showed up at your office demanding to resume therapy, I was furious. My instincts were screaming for revenge, to make you feel the same hurt I did. *Quid pro quo* , right?"

Will's voice trembled slightly, the weight of his unspoken confession hanging in the air. He didn't explicitly say that he had been planning to work with Jack to get close to Hannibal and turn him in, but the implication was clear. Hannibal's eyes sparked with a glint of understanding, the corners of his mouth tightening ever so briefly before he dismissed it with a slight nod.

Hannibal leaned forward slightly, his voice gentle but probing. "And now?" His eyes searched Will's, silently seeking the answer they both knew but needed to confirm.

Will's eyes met Hannibal's, a mixture of emotions swirling within them. "Now… I'm conflicted. The anger may have faded, but it's left behind something more complicated. I'm not sure what comes next, but I know that pretending everything can go back to how it was isn't possible. Too much has changed." He paused, the weight of his words hanging in the air. "But one thing is clear–I'm not looking for revenge anymore."

Hannibal visibly relaxed at Will's assurance, the tension in his shoulders easing as he leaned back slightly. His features relaxed, the guarded look replaced with something more open, more trusting. The slight shift in his posture made it clear that he understood the unspoken message: Will wasn't planning to turn him in to Jack. A small, almost imperceptible smile played at the corners of Hannibal's mouth, a silent acknowledgment of the fragile trust they were beginning to rebuild.

As Will sat there, the firelight smoldering between them, he weighed the pros and cons of exposing even more of his vulnerability. Being honest with Hannibal had always been a double-edged sword–offering clarity but also giving Hannibal ammunition to use against him. Yet, the depth of their connection demanded honesty, a raw openness that could either solidify their bond or shatter it completely. Hannibal had changed him irrevocably, pulling him into a world where he could no longer hide from his true nature. Deciding that the potential for deeper understanding outweighed the risks, Will took a deep breath, looking Hannibal in the eyes. "You've changed me, Hannibal. In ways I never expected. You've made me confront parts of myself I didn't even know existed."

Hannibal's gaze tightened, the usual mask of composure slipping. A whisper of surprise and hurt crossed his features, so easily read by Will. "Do you think I remain unchanged, Will?" he asked, his voice almost a whisper. "Do you believe that the transformations are one-sided?"

Will absorbed Hannibal's surprise and hurt, knowing they were warranted. Will knew Hannibal had changed. This man who once thrived on control, who orchestrated every detail with meticulous precision, now submitted to Will without question. The Hannibal he first met would never have allowed himself to be so vulnerable, so exposed. Will tried to reconcile this new image with the old one and found it impossible. The Hannibal he knew now was different–deeply changed by their shared experiences. A surge of empathy and understanding washed over Will, mingling with his own conflicting emotions. He saw the evolution in Hannibal, the subtle shifts in his behavior, the ways he had bent and adapted to their unique connection.

Hannibal leaned back slightly, his eyes never leaving Will's. He took a deep breath, his fingers tapping on the armrest. "We find ourselves ensnared in a paradox, Will," he began, his voice carrying a contemplative weight. As he spoke, his posture shifted, the tension in his shoulders becoming more pronounced. "Trust, once broken, is a fragile thing, difficult to mend. Yet, the only way to rebuild it is for one of us to take a leap of faith, to extend a hand despite the absence of trust. It requires an act of vulnerability, a willingness to expose oneself to the very possibility of betrayal again." Hannibal's fingers stilled, his entire body seeming to come to a conclusion.

Will reached for his whiskey glass, his fingers curling around the cool, familiar shape. He brought the glass to his lips, delighting in the burn as he took a slow, deliberate sip. Lowering the glass, he met Hannibal's gaze once more, the weight of the moment pressing down on him. "I want to trust you, Hannibal. But–"

"Abigail is alive," Hannibal cut him off, the words hanging heavily in the air. His shoulders tensed, a rigidity overtaking his body, and he watched Will intently, every muscle seemingly taut with anticipation.

Will's hand with the whiskey tumbler went limp with shock, and his tumbler clattered to the floor, the sound muffled by the rug. The glass didn't break, but the amber liquid soaked into the fabric, spreading out in a dark stain. Will didn't notice–his primary emotion shock. His mind raced, quickly considering the possibility that this was another manipulation. But as he met Hannibal's gaze, he could see the openness, the truth in his eyes. "W-what?" he stuttered, the shock making his voice unsteady. "Where… where is she?"

"She's in Italy, living her life, safe and well," Hannibal replied smoothly. "She's been given a second chance, Will. She is living her life as it should have been."

Another cold wave of shock washed over Will, momentarily leaving him speechless. His thoughts were a whirlwind, struggling to process this revelation. Hannibal continued, "She wanted you to–"

"Shut up," he snarled, his voice rising, a vicious anger replacing his shock. Driven by the intensity, Will abruptly stood up from the couch, the sudden movement startling in the quiet room. "You let me believe she was dead. That I killed her," he spat out. The strength of his emotions radiated off him, his body trembling with the force of his rage. His mind was a tempest, each thought crashing violently against the next.

Will felt like he had been slapped in the face. All night, he had felt like he and Hannibal were making real strides to rebuild the trust between them, and now Hannibal had just dropped this bombshell. Abigail was still alive, and Hannibal had been hiding it from him all along.

He thought back to the moment he believed Abigail had died at his hands, the crushing weight of guilt that had suffocated him. The memory of coughing up her ear, imagining how he could have killed her–it was a nightmare that had haunted his every waking moment. He had spent countless sleepless nights replaying that scene, drowning in the grief and self-loathing that consumed him.

Every attempt to rationalize, to forgive himself, had been futile. The image of Abigail's death was seared into his mind, an unrelenting torment. He remembered the depths of his despair, how it had almost driven him to madness. The guilt was a living entity, gnawing at his insides, hollowing him out until he was nothing but a shell of the man he once was. And then, the betrayal. The realization that Hannibal had orchestrated it all, that the man he had trusted, the man he had loved in his own twisted way, had been the architect of his suffering.

The grief had never truly left him. It had lingered, a dark shadow that tainted every moment of his life. Even as he had tried to move forward, to rebuild himself, the wound had remained raw and festering. And now, to learn that Abigail was alive, that Hannibal had kept this from

him–it was too much. The conflicting emotions surged within him, a volatile mix of anger, relief, and betrayal.

His vision blurred, his fists clenching so tightly that his knuckles turned white. The anger was almost blinding, a searing heat that threatened to consume him. He wanted to lash out, to make Hannibal feel a fraction of the pain he had endured. But beneath the anger, there was something else–a twisted sense of gratitude. Abigail was alive. She had a chance at a life he had thought lost forever.

The intensity of his emotions was overwhelming, a tidal wave that threatened to pull him under. He took a shuddering breath, trying to steady himself, willing his hands to unclench. The room seemed to close in around him, the walls pressing in as the weight of his grief and anger threatened to crush him. And yet, through it all, there was a flicker of hope. Abigail was alive. She was safe.

Hannibal remained composed, but the subtle cracks in his facade had begun to show. His normally steady hands trembled slightly, and his eyes, always so controlled, crumbled with an emotion that Will couldn't quite place. It was as if the weight of his actions was finally bearing down on him. "I did what I thought was necessary, Will. To protect her. To protect us." His voice broke on the last word, but Will hardly noticed, his own emotions taking precedence.

Will's fists clenched once more as he fought to contain the storm of emotions raging within him. "Necessary?" he spat, his voice rising. "You call that necessary? You let me drown in guilt and grief."

As the words left his mouth, Hannibal moved with a deliberate slowness, lowering himself off the couch to his knees in front of Will. The sight was jarring, the powerful and enigmatic Hannibal Lecter kneeling in a posture of pure submission. His head bowed slightly, eyes flicking up to meet Will's with a look of genuine contrition. There was a rawness in his expression, a vulnerability that Will had rarely seen.

Will's empathy, always a double-edged sword, cut through the fog of his anger. He felt Hannibal's pain, the deep remorse for the suffering he had caused. The intensity of it nearly took his breath away. Hannibal wasn't just apologizing; he was laying himself bare, exposing the depths of his guilt and regret. It wasn't just words–it was a visceral, almost physical manifestation of his remorse.

The realization hit Will like a tidal wave. He could see it all clearly now–the necessity of Hannibal's actions, the twisted logic that had driven him to such extremes. He saw the lengths Hannibal had gone to protect Abigail, to protect him, and it stirred something deep within him. The anger that had once burned so brightly began to morph into something else, something that both frightened and exhilarated him.

Hannibal's eyes, wide and imploring, locked onto Will's. "I did it for us, Will. For our future."

The sincerity in Hannibal's voice was undeniable. Will's anger began to ebb, replaced by a flood of intense, conflicting emotions. He felt a pang of empathy, a fierce protectiveness, and

an overwhelming desire all at once. The sight of Hannibal on his knees, begging for forgiveness, was almost too much to bear.

“What happened to Abigail had to happen,” Will whispered, his voice trembling with the weight of his realization. The statement hung in the air, almost a question.

“Yes,” Hannibal breathed back, his voice equally soft, filled with a quiet desperation.

Will’s heart pounded in his chest, the fury giving way to a nearly blinding desire. “You did it for us,” Will repeated, the words a blend of accusation and acceptance. “You wanted to protect us, but you broke me, Hannibal. You shattered everything I believed in.”

Hannibal’s eyes shone with unshed tears, the depths of his regret evident in every line of his face. “I know, Will. I know. I would do anything to make it right.”

Will stepped closer, his fingers brushing Hannibal’s cheek with a tenderness that belied the intensity of his emotions. The touch sent a shiver down Hannibal’s spine, his breath hitching in response. Will’s hand trailed down, his fingers grazing the pulse point at Hannibal’s throat, feeling the rapid beat beneath his fingertips. It was a heady sensation, knowing he held such power over the man who had once controlled him so completely.

Will’s anger, still smoldering, began to twist into something darker, more primal. His breaths grew heavier, the heat of his fury transforming into a different kind of heat altogether. The room seemed to shrink around them, the firelight casting shadows that danced in sync with the pounding of his heart. Each beat echoed in his ears, a relentless drum of building arousal.

The sharp edge of betrayal lingered, but it was now intertwined with a fierce, consuming desire. Will’s eyes darkened as he looked at Hannibal, the anger in them now mingling with a predatory hunger. He could feel his body responding, the blood rushing south, his skin prickling with the electrifying charge between them. The memory of pain and guilt was still there, but it fueled his need to dominate, to reclaim control in the most intimate way possible.

Will’s grip on Hannibal’s neck tightened slightly, feeling the pulse quicken under his touch. The raw vulnerability in Hannibal’s eyes only served to stoke the flames higher. The power dynamic had shifted dramatically, and Will reveled in it. His fingers moved lower, tracing the lines of Hannibal’s collarbone, each touch deliberate and possessive.

The air between them was thick with anticipation, the crackling energy of their shared desire close to sparking. Will’s voice was a deep growl, dripping with barely restrained lust. “Prove it to me, Hannibal,” he demanded, his tone leaving no room for argument. “Show me that you’re mine, that you’ll do anything to keep me.” The shift from rage to arousal was complete, the intensity of his need overriding all else. There was no going back now–only forward, into the depths of their twisted, powerful connection.

Hannibal’s breath hitched, his eyes widening slightly as he understood the implications of Will’s words. The look in his eyes was a mixture of fear and anticipation, a reflection of the complex emotions swirling within him. He nodded slowly, the movement a silent agreement. “Use me, Will,” he whispered, his voice trembling with a mix of submission and eagerness.

Chapter End Notes

Heh, feel free to come yell at me on Tumblr @graciereadshannigram about cutting this chapter off where I did!

Part two is already written, and it should be up this weekend!!

Bound and Bonded, Part 2

Chapter Summary

it's all smut, that's all i've got LOL

Chapter Notes

so i forgot i'm going camping for the next couple days and i figured it'd be a lot nicer of me to go ahead and post early rather than potentially waiting until next monday (that would be CRUEL), so here you go :)

enjoy!!!

beta'd by Jay_Is_A_Rat, any remaining mistakes are mine <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Use me, Will,” he whispered, his voice trembling with a mix of submission and eagerness.

The words were a catalyst, igniting the desire that had been simmering beneath the surface. Will’s anger transformed into a fierce, possessive need. Heat spread through his body, pooling in his core, his arousal intensifying with each passing second. His cock throbbed, filling out as his desire grew, straining against the fabric of his jeans. His teeth itched to sink into Hannibal’s skin, to leave marks that would remind him who he belonged to. Will’s pulse quickened, a primal hunger driving him to claim and dominate the man kneeling before him.

Hannibal’s submission, his willingness to offer himself completely, only fed Will’s burgeoning need. He could feel the raw power coursing through his veins, an almost electric sensation that left him breathless and aching for more. His gaze swept over Hannibal, taking in his body language: his bowed head, the tension in his shoulders, and the vulnerability that lay beneath his composed exterior.

The view of Hannibal’s imploring eyes looking up at him, the sheer vulnerability in his posture–Will’s restraint was fraying. His hand tightened in Hannibal’s hair, a possessive grip that sent a clear message. Will’s breath was ragged, the sheer force of his need threatening to overwhelm him. He could feel his control slipping, the line between anger and desire blurring until there was nothing left but the raw, unbridled hunger to claim what was his.

Will’s mind raced as he fought to maintain some semblance of control. He could feel the primal urge to *take* , nearly overwhelming his senses. His grip on Hannibal’s hair tightened,

his voice dropping to a low, husky rumble. “You’re going to need a safe word, baby,” he murmured, the endearment laced with a dark promise.

Hannibal’s breath hitched, his eyes widening slightly at the unexpected tenderness in Will’s tone. The contrast between the possessive grip and the gentle words sent a shiver down his spine. He nodded, understanding the necessity of the precaution. “Teacup,” he whispered, the word a quiet acknowledgment of the trust he was placing in Will.

Will snorted softly, the sound a mixture of amusement and something deeper, darker. “Teacup,” he echoed. “That’ll work.” His eyes locked onto Hannibal’s, the intensity of his gaze leaving no room for doubt about his intentions.

Will’s mind flashed back to his dream, the vivid memory of Hannibal bound to a tree, utterly at his mercy. The image had stirred something deep within Will, a dark and intoxicating blend of power and desire. Now, as he stood close to Hannibal, feeling the rapid pulse beneath his fingers, the memory surged to the forefront of his mind. The need to recreate that scene, to see Hannibal bound and helpless in his bed, consumed him. The dream had been a revelation, a glimpse into his deepest, most primal desires. He wanted to see Hannibal restrained, to feel absolute control over the man who had once held such power over him. The thought alone sent a rush of heat through his body, solidifying his decision.

His heart pounded as he led Hannibal to the bed in the living room. The old set of restraints he had stashed away for years, remnants of a relationship that had never made it past the early stages, were now a necessary tool. Will’s hands trembled slightly as he retrieved them, the leather straps thick and sturdy. The bed in the living room was a stroke of fortune, saving them from the impatience of climbing stairs. He doubted they would have made it to an upstairs bedroom.

As they reached the bed, Will made a deliberate decision to leave Hannibal clothed. There was something intensely erotic about the contrast between Hannibal’s refined attire and the raw vulnerability of his position. The fabric of his slacks and dress shirt, still mostly buttoned and neat, made the view of him bound all the more tantalizing. Will’s fingers brushed over the smooth material, feeling the heat of Hannibal’s body radiating through the cloth.

Hannibal watched him with dark, expectant eyes, his gaze unwavering and filled with almost unbearable need. Each movement Will made was calculated, precise, the atmosphere between them charged with electric anticipation. Will wrapped the first leather strap around Hannibal’s wrist, the sensation of the worn leather against his skin sending a shiver of arousal through him. He secured the strap tightly but carefully, ensuring it was firm enough to hold but not to hurt.

As he fastened the other wrist, Will’s own arousal grew. The sight of Hannibal’s arms bound, his body splayed out and completely at Will’s mercy, was a powerful aphrodisiac. The tension in the room thickened, every breath they took laden with the promise of what was to come. Hannibal’s eyes followed his every movement, dark and needy, conveying a silent plea for Will to take what was being offered. It was as if Hannibal was begging for Will to use his body to work through his anger, offering himself as a vessel for atonement.

Will's fingers traced the lines of Hannibal's body through his clothes, the fabric hugging his form in all the right places. He marveled at the way the dress shirt accentuated Hannibal's lean frame, the way the slacks clung to his thighs. Leaving him clothed added an extra layer of control, a reminder that Will was in charge, dictating the terms of their encounter.

The straps were fully adjusted, and Will stepped back for a moment, taking in the sight before him. Hannibal, bound and ready, his body a canvas of potential. The look in his eyes was one of complete surrender, a reflection of the trust and devotion that had brought them to this point. Will's breath quickened, the primal urge to dominate almost overwhelming his senses.

Taking a deep breath to center himself and push back his own arousal, Will climbed onto the bed, positioning himself over Hannibal, his eyes locked on his lover's. He could see the desperation in Hannibal's gaze, the raw need for this connection, and Will knew he needed it too. Their bodies couldn't lie to one another; this physical intimacy was the most honest and direct way of communicating their deepest emotions, far more eloquent than words could ever be.

The leather restraints creaked softly as Hannibal tested them, the sound mingling with their ragged breaths and creating an intoxicating symphony. Will's voice was low, rough with desire. "You look perfect like this," he murmured, his fingers tracing the lines of Hannibal's chest. The heat between them was almost unbearable, a tangible force drawing them closer. Will's touch was both reverent and possessive, mapping the expanse of Hannibal's body as if to memorize every contour.

Hannibal's breath caught, a shiver running through him at Will's words as he arched up into the touch. The look in his eyes was one of complete surrender, an unspoken promise of devotion. Will's heart swelled with fierce, possessive pride, knowing that Hannibal was wholly his. The line between anger and desire had blurred, leaving only raw, unbridled need.

"Here's how this is going to work," Will began, his voice deep and assertive, each word dripping with authority and intent. He moved closer, fingers tracing a slow, deliberate path down Hannibal's chest, feeling the heat of his body through the fabric. "You're nothing more than a tool for my pleasure tonight. This isn't about you, Hannibal. It's about me. I'm going to take what I want, and you're going to give it to me. Understand?"

Hannibal's eyes widened, then darkened with a mix of arousal and anticipation. He nodded, a small, almost imperceptible movement, but the eagerness in his expression was unmistakable. Too eager.

Will's hand shot out, delivering a sharp slap to Hannibal's cheek. The sound echoed in the room, a sharp punctuation to his words. It wasn't hard enough to hurt, just enough to sting and drive the point home. Hannibal's head snapped to the side, his breath hitching in surprise and pleasure.

"Don't look so eager," Will snarled, his voice a dangerous whisper. He gripped Hannibal's chin, forcing him to meet his gaze. "You're here to serve *me* , to fulfill *my* needs. This is for my satisfaction, not yours. Got it?"

Hannibal's eyes glittered with a blend of submission and desire, his cheek blooming a deep red as Will soothed the skin with his fingertips. "Yes, Will," he breathed, his voice hushed, laced with a need that bordered on desperation.

Will released his grip, his hand trailing down to Hannibal's throat, feeling the rapid pulse beneath his fingertips. "Good," he murmured, his voice matching the heat in his veins. "Now let's get started."

Will's eyes roamed over Hannibal's body, taking in the sight of him spread out and restrained. The leather straps binding his wrists contrasted sharply against his pale skin, emphasizing his vulnerability and Will's absolute control. The sight made Will's breath hitch, his stomach clenching with an intense wave of desire.

With a deliberate slowness, Will's gaze lingered on Hannibal's restrained form, the tension in the air thick and electric. The anticipation built between them, every movement charged with erotic potential. His arousal grew, an intense need to claim and dominate overwhelming his senses.

Slowly, Will began to palm himself through his jeans, his touch deliberate and teasing, indulging in the way his own body responded to the sight before him. "Fuck, Hannibal," he purred, his voice thick with arousal. "Look at you. So fucking perfect, all tied up and ready for me. You have no idea what it does to me, seeing you like this. Completely at my mercy."

His hand pressed harder against his erection, the friction sending sparks of pleasure through him. He watched as Hannibal's eyes followed his movements, the hunger and anticipation in them almost unbearable. "You're mine, Hannibal," Will continued, his tone dark and possessive. "You can't do anything but take what I give you. And I'm going to take everything."

Will's other hand slid down to the hem of his shirt, lifting it slightly to reveal the hard lines of his abdomen, the defined muscles flexing as he continued to pleasure himself. "I want you to watch, Hannibal," he commanded, his voice a low, seductive purr. "Watch as I get off while looking at you, bound and helpless, just waiting for me to use you."

He could see the way Hannibal's body tensed, his breath quickening, and it only fueled Will's desire. "You're going to take everything I give you, every bit of my pleasure. And you're going to love it, aren't you?" His words were a taunt, a promise, as his hand moved faster, the pressure and heat building with each stroke.

Will leaned closer, his breath ghosting over Hannibal's skin, close enough to touch but not quite. "You're going to be my good little whore tonight, Hannibal. My perfect, obedient toy. And I'm going to make sure you feel every second of it."

Will moved down, his body brushing against Hannibal's, feeling the heat radiating from his skin. He settled over Hannibal's legs, positioning himself with predatory grace. His fingers brushed over Hannibal's hips, feeling the tension coiled in his muscles. With deliberate slowness, he reached for the waistband of Hannibal's pants, the fabric soft under his touch. He savored the moment, drawing it out, letting the anticipation build between them. The

subtle scent of Hannibal's cologne mingled with the heady musk of arousal, creating an intoxicating atmosphere.

The sound of the zipper descending was loud in the quiet room, each metallic click sending a shiver through Hannibal. Will's fingers moved deftly, peeling the fabric away to expose Hannibal's bare skin. Hannibal's erection, hard and straining, made Will's mouth water. He dragged the pants down, bunching them around Hannibal's knees, effectively trapping his legs together.

As the pants slid lower, the silky red briefs came into view, their vibrant color striking against Hannibal's skin. Will's breath hitched at the sight, the eroticism of the moment heightening his own arousal. He hooked his fingers under the waistband and dragged them down, the silk slipping easily over Hannibal's hips. The slow, deliberate movement teased Hannibal's cock, straining against the fabric before springing free. Will's eyes darkened with lust as he took in the sight, Hannibal's erection standing proud, a bead of pre-come glistening at the tip.

Will paused to admire the view. Hannibal's legs, trapped together by the half-removed clothing, added a delicious sense of helplessness. His thighs trembled slightly, muscles taut with anticipation and desire.

"Beautiful," Will murmured, his voice a low, throaty purr. His fingers traced a path along Hannibal's inner thigh, feeling the heat radiating from his skin. The light, teasing touch was a promise of what was to come. His own arousal surged, his cock straining against his jeans, a reminder of his own need.

Barely able to contain himself, Will stepped back from the bed, his eyes never leaving Hannibal's bound form. He wanted to draw out every moment until Hannibal was writhing uncontrollably. Slowly, he began to undress, making sure Hannibal watched every move. First, Will kicked off his shoes, the thud against the floor echoing in the otherwise silent room. He peeled off his shirt inch by inch, revealing the taut muscles of his chest and abdomen.

Hannibal's eyes followed every motion, darkening with lust. Will saw the hunger in his gaze, the way his breath quickened, his chest rising and falling with each shallow inhale. Hannibal's eyes on him had always felt good, grounding him in the heady mix of power and desire that flowed between them, and now was no different. As Will moved to unbutton his jeans, Hannibal's eyes fluttered closed for a moment, a soft, choked-off moan escaping his lips.

"Keep your eyes open," Will snapped, his voice like a whip, cutting through the room. Hannibal's eyes snapped back open, wide and obedient, a flicker of contrition and excitement mingling in his gaze. The sight made Will's cock ache, begging to be released from the tight confines of denim.

Will slid his jeans down his legs, the denim rasping against his skin, and moaning as he palmed his cock in relief. He stood for a moment, letting Hannibal take in the sight, before finally hooking his thumbs into the waistband of his briefs and pulling them down, completely freeing his aching erection. Hannibal's gaze locked onto Will's cock, his pupils completely dilated with desire.

Climbing back onto the bed, Will positioned himself over Hannibal, his cock dragging against the fabric of his shirt. Hannibal's stomach jumped at the contact, and Will saw the struggle in his eyes–the effort it took to keep them open, to remain obedient under the intense wave of desire crashing over him. Will's lips curled into a satisfied smirk.

"Good boy," he murmured, his voice a low, sensual purr. "Now, keep watching. Don't look away for a second."

Reaching over to the nightstand, Will grabbed the familiar bottle of lube. The soft pop of the cap was loud in the quiet room. He poured a generous amount into his palm, the cool gel quickly warming against his skin. Will rubbed it over his cock, each stroke slow and deliberate, biting back a moan at the feel of his own hand, finally finding a small amount of release.

Hannibal's gaze was fixed on Will's hand, watching intently as he slicked his cock. The glistening sheen of the lube made each movement more pronounced, more erotic. Will's cock twitched under his own touch, the lube heightening every sensation. Hannibal's breath hitched, his eyes darkening with desire as he observed Will's every exaggerated move. His own cock twitched and leaked, a clear sign of his desperate arousal. Seeing Hannibal bound and utterly focused on him sent a surge of power through Will. He felt like a god, with Hannibal at his mercy, ready and willing to take whatever Will gave him.

"Look at you, so needy," Will taunted, his voice dripping with lust. "You want this, don't you? You want me to use you."

Hannibal's breath hitched, a quiet moan escaping his lips as he nodded, his eyes never leaving Will's cock. Watching Hannibal's body trembling with need was almost too much for Will. He slowed the motions of his hand attempting to bank his own desire from heightening with the power he held over Hannibal.

"Tell me how much you want it," Will demanded, his tone commanding yet filled with dark desire.

"Will… I want it," Hannibal whispered, his voice trembling. "I need you to use me, to take whatever you want."

Will's smirk widened, satisfied by Hannibal's admission. He gripped his slick cock, his hand sliding up and down with deliberate, teasing slowness. Each motion was designed to draw out his pleasure, the friction sending shivers of arousal through his body. His breath hitched, a low groan escaping his lips as his pleasure climbed with every stroke.

Hannibal's eyes were glued to Will's hand, his own breath quickening in response. Will watched him intently, noting every detail: the way Hannibal's lips parted slightly, a silent plea for more; the way his chest heaved with each breath, rising and falling rapidly; the way his cock twitched and leaked pre-come, glistening in the firelight.

"Look at you," Will murmured, his voice thick with desire. "So desperate for it." His strokes became firmer, his grip tightening just enough to send sparks of pleasure shooting through him. Hannibal's reaction was immediate, a soft whimper escaping his throat, his body

straining against the restraints. Will's eyes darkened with lust, Hannibal's obvious need only fueling his own arousal.

"You like watching me, don't you?" Will's voice was low and seductive as his hand moved faster, each stroke bringing him closer to the edge, his body tingling with anticipation.

Hannibal's eyes were wide, his breath coming in short, desperate gasps. "Y-yes, Will… I… I love watching you," he stammered, his voice shaking with barely controlled desire. "You're… magnificent. So beautiful…" An involuntary groan escaped his lips, his cock jerking in response, a bead of pre-come glistening at the tip. The sight sent a sharp spike of arousal through Will, the intensity of Hannibal's need mirrored in his own.

The power Will felt was intoxicating. Every whimper, every flutter of Hannibal's eyes, every tense muscle fed into Will's desire, heightening his pleasure. He knew he could take whatever he wanted, and Hannibal would give it to him willingly.

Hannibal's eyes flicked away, an attempt to escape the intensity, but Will had been clear. "Don't you dare look away," he growled, tightening his grip around his slick length. "I want you to see everything. Know exactly how much you affect me."

Hannibal's eyes widened, his breath coming in short, sharp gasps. His tongue darted out to wet his lips, and Will saw his muscles straining against the restraints, the veins in his neck standing out as he fought to keep his eyes open. The beautiful, desperate struggle only made Will's pleasure climb higher.

"That's it," Will whispered, his voice trembling with the effort to keep control. His strokes became more aggressive, the wet sound of lube and flesh echoing in the room. "Watch me. Feel what I feel. Know that you're the one making this happen."

Hannibal's whimpers grew louder, his hips jerking involuntarily as he was forced to witness Will's raw desire. Will's cock throbbed in his hand, the slick slide of his palm heightening the intensity of his pleasure.

The power, the control, the sheer eroticism of the moment was overwhelming. Will's eyes jumped to Hannibal's cock again, watching as another drop of pre-come fell, making his own cock throb harder. Hannibal's cock looked so good, thick and glistening, and Will imagined how good it would feel stretching him, filling him up completely, a deep empty ache building inside that demanded to be satisfied. Will's strokes became faster, more frantic, his pleasure building to a fever pitch. He could see the effect on Hannibal, his body straining against the restraints, his beautiful cock hard and leaking against his stomach.

Will's body trembled with the intensity of his arousal, his hand a blur on his slick, throbbing hardness. He was so close, the pleasure almost unbearable. But he held back, savoring the power and connection between them. He wanted to stretch the moment into an exquisite eternity, basking in Hannibal's growing desperation.

The pleasure built within Will, a relentless wave crashing against the shores of his control. His breath came in ragged gasps, each stroke sending electric jolts of ecstasy through his

veins. He could feel the raw need to claim and mark growing stronger with every second. Locking eyes with Hannibal, the mirrored desire there stoked the flames of his own lust.

Will's decision came with a rush of heat and a surge of possessiveness. He wanted to mark Hannibal, to see his release splatter across the pristine fabric of Hannibal's shirt. The thought sent a shiver of anticipation down his spine, his strokes becoming faster, more urgent. He watched Hannibal's chest rise and fall rapidly, the anticipation in his eyes making Will's pleasure spike even higher. Hannibal's body writhed beneath him, hips lifting off the bed in a desperate attempt to gain friction, his moans growing louder and more wanton, driving Will to the brink.

The moment was a heady mix of power and lust. Will's hand moved with purpose, the slick sounds of his strokes mingling with Hannibal's desperate, needy sounds. Every inch of Will's body was alive with sensation, the desire to claim Hannibal consuming him entirely. Hannibal's fingers curled around the restraints, knuckles white from the force of his grip, body straining against the bonds as if they were the only thing keeping him grounded.

His climax hit like a thunderbolt, a powerful surge that left him gasping, every muscle in his body tensing with the force of his release. His hand moved faster, fist pumping in frantic strokes, milking every drop of pleasure from his throbbing cock. As the first spurt of come erupted, thick and hot, Will angled himself towards Hannibal's chest, the fluid splattering across the fabric in an arc of white heat. Hannibal's eyes widened, breath hitching as he watched Will's come mark him, his own cock twitching and leaking in response.

Thick ropes of come painted Hannibal's chest, stark white against the dark fabric of his shirt. Will's hand didn't stop, continuing to pump, drawing out every last bit of his release. The feeling of marking Hannibal sent shockwaves of pleasure through him, each spurt a declaration of ownership. He watched as Hannibal's pupils dilated, the lust in his eyes deepening, the feeling of being marked triggering something feral and submissive in his gaze. Hannibal's moans turned into gasps, his body trembling with the intensity of his desire, hips thrusting reflexively, the restraints cutting into his skin as he pulled, desperate for more.

Each spurt of come felt like a declaration, a mark of possession, sending ripples of satisfaction through Will. His body trembled with the force of his climax, muscles quivering as the last drops of come dribbled from his cock. He looked at Hannibal, taking in his come-splattered chest, the dark fabric stained with his essence, a symbol of his claim. Hannibal's chest heaved, breaths shallow and rapid, eyes locked onto Will with a mixture of desperation and adoration, his entire body a testament to his submission and need.

Hannibal's eyes were glued to Will, the heat between them almost tangible. The sight of his own release on Hannibal's chest, the way it clung to the fabric, sent a final shiver of pleasure through Will. He leaned back slightly, breath still coming in heavy pants, a smug, satisfied smile playing on his lips. Hannibal's tongue darted out to wet his lips, a whimper escaping as he shifted, the restraints holding fast.

The arousal simmering in Will's gut refused to fade, a constant, insistent pulse of need. He felt it coil tighter, that dark, delicious urge to take Hannibal inside him, to use his cock for his own pleasure coming back with a vengeance. The idea of Hannibal's cock buried deep within him gripped Will's mind, the sheer novelty sending a shiver of arousal through his entire

body. The thought of riding Hannibal, feeling him stretch and fill him had Will breathless, the ache inside him almost unbearable. His hole clenched around nothing, a physical reminder of the emptiness he desperately wanted to fill.

Will's gaze locked onto Hannibal's, a wicked smile curling his lips. "You're not done yet, Hannibal," he purred, his voice dripping with promise. He moved closer, breath hot against Hannibal's ear. "I'm going to ride you, use your cock to get myself off." Will's fingers traced a slow path down Hannibal's chest, catching on a stiff nipple through the fabric. "And you? You're not allowed to come."

Hannibal's breath hitched at Will's words and wandering hands. Will's hand moved lower, brushing over Hannibal's hard length, eliciting a low moan. "I want to feel you inside me, filling me up, but you don't get the satisfaction. Not yet." His words were laced with a filthy, raw edge. "I'm going to fuck myself on your cock, over and over, until I'm satisfied. You're just my toy tonight, Hannibal. My perfect, desperate, aching toy."

Hannibal's eyes widened, a mix of desperation and raw desire darkening his gaze. " *Will,* " he whispered, his voice rough with need. His hips bucked involuntarily into the caress of Will's hand, the thought of what Will was about to do driving him wild.

Will chuckled darkly, shaking his head. *God, he looks incredible.* "Look at you, already so desperate," he mocked, his voice dripping with contempt and desire. "You're nothing but a toy for me to use, Hannibal. Remember that."

Hannibal's breath hitched, his body trembling with anticipation. "Yes, Will, I'm your toy," he pleaded, his voice barely a whisper.

Will's hands roamed over his own body, teasing and caressing, his fingers lingering on his nipples, drawing out soft moans from his lips. He felt like he was on fire, and his eyes never left Hannibal's, the connection between them electric. "But first, I want you to watch closely," Will murmured, his voice gravelly as he dipped down to purr into Hannibal's ear. "I want you to see exactly how I get myself ready for you."

His heart raced as he turned around, repositioning himself, making sure Hannibal had an unobstructed view of his every move. Hannibal, restrained and desperate, was reduced to incoherent moans as Will lightly ground down on Hannibal, seeking relief for his aching hole. He reached for the lube, squeezing a fresh amount onto his fingers, and began to slowly stroke his own entrance, his breath hitching at the initial contact.

The slick glide of his fingers against his rim sent shivers through his body. Hannibal's eyes were glued to Will, his breath coming in ragged gasps as he watched Will's fingers alternated between gentle strokes, and light taps. Will's movements were almost agonizingly slow, as he pressed one finger inside, groaning softly at the sensation. He wasn't sure who he was torturing more–himself or Hannibal–as he moved with a deliberate pace, ensuring that Hannibal saw every twitch of his muscles, every inch that he took.

"God, my fingers feel so fucking good," Will muttered, his voice thick with arousal, his words punctuated by soft moans. He added a second finger, scissoring them to stretch himself further. The tightness gave way to a delicious burn, and he bit his lip, his eyes locking on

Hannibal's in the reflection of a nearby mirror. "I'm going to take my time… make sure I'm nice and ready for you. And you… you're just going to watch."

Hannibal's face was a picture of desperate desire. His eyes were wide and wild, pupils blown with lust, fixed intently on Will's every movement. His mouth hung open, struggling to suck in enough air for his lungs, a testament to the intensity of his longing. Sweat glistened on his forehead, and his lips were parted, dry from the shallow, rapid breaths he took. Hannibal's arms strained against the restraints, muscles taut and trembling, veins standing out starkly against his skin. Every inch of his body screamed for Will, the sheer need evident in the way his fingers flexed and tightened around the leather cuffs, knuckles white from the force of his grip. His cock twitched, bobbing against his clothed stomach, the tip glistening in the dim light.

Will's breath hitched, his moans growing louder as he moved his fingers in and out, each thrust bringing him closer to the edge. His free hand roamed over his chest, teasing his nipples, his chest, his neck, adding to the overwhelming sensations coursing through him.

He closed his eyes, picturing the scene from Hannibal's perspective: his own body spread out, vulnerable, fingers working in and out with a tantalizing rhythm. The thought made him swear under his breath, "Fuck, Hannibal, you're driving me crazy," he gasped, the intensity of his own pleasure making his voice tremble. He opened his eyes to see the tension in Hannibal's body, the way his muscles quivered with the effort to hold back, the raw, unfiltered need etched into every line of his face.

In response, Will began moving his fingers faster, pushing deeper, seeking that sweet spot inside that would send waves of ecstasy crashing through him. Hannibal's eyes never wavered, drinking in the sight of Will's fingers working himself open, the way his body responded with shudders of pleasure.

Will's fingers worked diligently, adding a third, stretching himself wide. He could feel the muscles relaxing, accommodating the intrusion, and he arched his back, thrusting his hips slightly to push his fingers deeper. A gasp escaped him as he finally brushed against his prostate, the intense pleasure shooting through his body. He bit his lip, reveling in the sensation, and began to tease himself, each light brush against that spot calculated to heighten both his own pleasure and Hannibal's torment. The moans grew louder, the rhythm of his fingers relentless as he chased the exquisite pleasure.

"See how good I look, g-getting myself ready for you?" Will taunted, his voice a mix of satisfaction and desperate lust. He could feel the slick heat, the readiness building, and he slowed his pace, teasing himself as much as Hannibal. "God, you're going to l-love how tight I am around you," he panted, his voice hitching with every thrust of his fingers. "How I'll m-milk you for every drop." His words were broken by gasps, the pleasure almost overwhelming as he continued to work himself open, his body trembling with anticipation.

Hannibal's eyes were dark and piercing, his breath coming in short, desperate bursts. His hands clenched into fists, the restraints biting into his skin as he fought to keep still. His chest heaved, and his entire body quivered with pent-up desire. "Please, Will," he begged, his voice strained and ragged. "I need… I need to… touch you, feel you." His hips moved upward, emphasizing his point.

Will smirked, a dark glint in his eyes. “Not yet, baby.” His fingers curled to hit that perfect spot inside, making him shudder with pleasure. He fought the urge to quicken his pace, knowing he’d come right then if he did. Instead, he kept up the slow, torturous rhythm, ensuring that Hannibal saw every quiver of his muscles, every gasp of pleasure. “You don’t get w-what you want. This is for m-me,” he groaned, his breath catching as he teased himself mercilessly, drawing out the exquisite torment for them both.

Hannibal’s breath came in ragged gasps, his chest heaving with the effort to maintain control. His eyes followed Will’s fingers with an almost hypnotic intensity, his body trembling with each deliberate stroke. The muscles in his shoulders and neck strained as he fought to remain still, his moans growing more desperate with each passing moment.

Will’s own pleasure built to a fever pitch, his body slick and ready. He took a deep breath, bringing himself back from the brink as he finally withdrew his fingers, his chest heaving with the effort. Hannibal’s eyes widened in anticipation, the raw need evident in his gaze. “Now,” he said, positioning himself over Hannibal’s cock, “now I’m going to fuck myself on you. And you? You’re going to take it.”

With a deliberate, slow movement, Will positioned himself carefully, his back still facing Hannibal, offering the best view. As Will began to lower himself onto Hannibal’s cock, the sensation was overwhelming. The initial stretch made him gasp, even after preparing himself so well. Every inch felt like a delicious burn, the size of Hannibal’s cock intensifying the feeling of fullness. Will’s eyes fluttered shut for a moment, his breath broken in his throat as he adjusted to the intrusion.

The raw, primal connection between them sent shivers down his spine. He could feel every pulse, every vein, as he sank deeper, the friction igniting sparks of pleasure that coursed through his body. It was an all-consuming wave–need, desire, power, and an undeniable sense of belonging. The sheer intimacy of the act, the surrender and dominance intertwined, brought a heady rush that made Will’s head spin.

He could see the intensity mirrored in Hannibal’s eyes, a mix of awe and desperation that set Will further ablaze. Hannibal’s moans echoed his own, a perfect symphony of need and surrender. Will moved with a deliberate, torturous slowness, pulling up until just the head of Hannibal’s cock was caught in his hole.

“Feel that?” Will gasped, his hips slamming down to the hilt. Hannibal’s voice pitched lower on a deep groan. “You fill me up so good, Hannibal,” he continued, his voice trembling with the rawness of it all. “God, you’re so deep… I can feel you everywhere. So fucking good Hannibal.” The words spilled out of Will almost without permission as he was momentarily overcome with pleasure.

Hannibal’s head thrashed against the bed, his body taut with the effort to obey. His muscles strained, his wrists pulling against the restraints as he fought to keep still. “Yes, Will,” he moaned, his voice raw with need. “Anything you want. Just… please.”

Hannibal’s desperation grounded Will, and his laughter was dark and satisfied, the sound a low rumble that sent shivers down Hannibal’s spine. “Good boy,” he purred as he rode Hannibal with a relentless rhythm, each twist of his hips drawing a strangled moan from

Hannibal's lips. Watching Hannibal's reflection in the mirror thrash in desperate arousal beneath him was the most intoxicating thing he had ever experienced.

Will's hips snapped down with increasing intensity, the slick heat and tightness driving him to the edge. He could feel Hannibal's cock throbbing inside him, every pulse sending waves of pleasure through his body. He was grateful he had already come once, or else this would have ended too quickly. The endurance granted by his first orgasm now allowed him to stretch out the moment, savoring every sensation.

Will briefly marveled at Hannibal's restraint, surprised and impressed by how he was holding on. He was being so good, so obedient, that Will decided to push him just a little further. "Look at you," Will preened, his voice dripping with satisfaction. "So desperate, so needy. You're mine, Hannibal. Every inch of you." His hands roamed over Hannibal's thighs, enjoying the tension coiled in his muscles.

Hannibal's eyes were glazed with lust, his body shuddering with every thrust. Each desperate, submissive moan from Hannibal made Will's cock throb and leak, the raw need in Hannibal's eyes pushing him closer to the edge. The way Hannibal's body writhed, completely undone and yet obedient, was the most erotic thing Will had ever witnessed, each pulse and twitch driving him wild with desire.

Hannibal's eyes were glazed with lust, his body shuddering with every thrust. "Y-yours," Hannibal whimpered, his voice trembling. "Will, please, I need…" His words trailed off into a moan, his body arching as Will's pace quickened, each movement designed to push them both to the brink.

Will's lips curved into a wicked smile as he continued to ride Hannibal with a deliberate rhythm, feeling the heat building inside him. The sensation of Hannibal's cock, twitching and pulsing within him, was intoxicating. "I know what you need, darlin'," he rumbled back towards Hannibal. "You're going to take it, just like this. You're going to feel how good you make me feel."

Hannibal's eyes were dark with desperation, his body straining against the restraints. "Please, Will," he begged, his voice trembling with need. "I'll do anything. Just let me come."

Will's response was to slow his movements, drawing out the pleasure and intensifying Hannibal's torment. Leaning back, he placed his hands on Hannibal's chest for leverage, grinding his hips in slow, torturous circles. The exquisite friction sent sparks of pleasure through his body, and Will felt Hannibal's cock swelling inside him, the desperation palpable in every twitch and throb.

With a mischievous glint in his eyes, Will suddenly lifted himself off Hannibal's cock, a whimper escaping Hannibal's lips at the loss. Hannibal's eyes widened with a mix of panic and desperation, the fear of Will stopping now evident in his gaze.

Will made direct eye contact, and reached out to caress Hannibal's cheek. "Don't worry, I'm not going anywhere," he murmured, his voice a soothing balm to Hannibal's anxiety. The reassurance calmed Hannibal just enough, though the tension in his body remained.

Hannibal's panic was thrilling for Will, a reminder of the power he wielded in this moment. He held Hannibal's gaze as he shifted his position, every movement deliberate and unhurried, heightening the anticipation. Turning to face forward, he resettled himself, the change in angle promising new depths of pleasure.

As Will guided Hannibal's length back inside him, he did it slowly, savoring every inch. The sensation of being filled again was overwhelming, the stretch and fullness eliciting deep, guttural moans from both of them.

"Feel that, Hannibal?" Will groaned, his voice a low, sultry murmur. "I'm not going anywhere. I'm going to take you, make you feel every second of this."

He began to move, each thrust deep and deliberate, the new position allowing him to control the angle and depth with exquisite precision. Hannibal's cock hit all the right spots inside him, sending shivers of pleasure up Will's spine.

Hannibal's body responded eagerly, his hips bucking up to meet Will's movements, ragged moans filling the room. The raw need in Hannibal's eyes, the way his body strained to get closer, drove Will higher.

"God, you feel so good," Will groaned, his head falling back as he rode the wave of pleasure. "So fucking good, Hannibal." His hips moved faster, the sensation of Hannibal stretching and hitting every spot inside him driving him to the brink. Each thrust was deliberate and intense, their connection electric.

Hannibal's body convulsed beneath him, each thrust making his breath come in ragged gasps. "Will, please," he sobbed, his voice breaking, a mixture of desperation and arousal. "I can't… I can't hold it."

Will's grin was fierce, triumphant. He leaned forward, his hot breath sending shivers down Hannibal's spine. "You can," he whispered, his voice dark and commanding, dripping with raw power. "You will."

He rocked his hips harder, the relentless rhythm sending jolts of pleasure through both of them. Hannibal's moans grew louder, more desperate, his body trembling with the effort to obey Will's command. The feel of Hannibal's cock throbbing inside him, every pulse a testament to his restraint, heightened Will's own arousal.

Will's fingers dug into Hannibal's chest, the sensation of flesh under his nails grounding him in the intensity of the moment. " *Fuck* , you feel so good inside of me," he growled, his voice a dark rumble that vibrated against Hannibal's skin. "Do you know how much I'm enjoying this?"

Hannibal's response was a choked whimper, his head thrashing against the pillow as he fought to hold back. The raw need in his eyes, the way his body strained against the restraints, was an erotic sight that sent waves of pleasure through Will.

Hannibal's moans turned into desperate sobs, his body writhing under Will's relentless assault. "Please, Will," he begged, his voice hoarse with need. "Please, I'll do anything. Just

let me… please."

Will's resolve softened, a surge of affection mingling with his dominant desire, even as his hips continued snapping down with brutal intensity. He could feel Hannibal's cock throbbing inside him, the need for release almost painful. His own breath hitched, the friction and heat driving him to the brink.

"You want to come, baby?" Will purred, his tone dripping with seductive promise. He leaned closer, his breath hot against Hannibal's ear, every word a caress. Hannibal's response was a strangled moan, his hips thrusting up into Will's body. The intensity of Will's thrusts increased, each movement a calculated push toward the edge. The feeling of Hannibal's cock pulsing inside him, straining for release, sent waves of pleasure coursing through Will's body. He rocked his hips with precision, each motion designed to drive Hannibal wild.

"You're doing so well," Will praised, his words a mix of dominance and encouragement.

The effect of Will's words was immediate and electric. Hannibal's entire body tensed beneath him, his muscles locking up as he teetered on the edge of oblivion. Will could see the conflict in Hannibal's eyes, the desperate need to obey warring with the overwhelming urge to release. Every breath Hannibal took was a ragged gasp, his chest heaving, his lips parting in a silent plea.

Will's own arousal spiked at the sight. He felt Hannibal's cock throb inside him, each pulse a testament to his partner's barely contained desire. His body twisted against the restraints, the leather biting into his skin, muscles taut with desperate need. His eyes were wild, filled with a mix of urgent need and adoration, every nerve in his body screaming for release.

"You've done so well, baby," Will praised into Hannibal's ear, his voice a dark, seductive whisper. "Go on, fill me up, let go."

Hannibal's orgasm hit like a storm, a powerful surge that wracked his entire body. Noises of pure ecstasy filled the room, raw and unrestrained, full of animalistic pleasure. Will watched Hannibal's face contort with pleasure, the raw, unfiltered emotion a heady aphrodisiac. His eyes fluttered shut, his mouth open in a wordless cry, his body trembling with the force of his release. The sight and feel of Hannibal's utter surrender sent a powerful jolt of arousal through Will, the heady mix of control and passion nearly overwhelming.

Will felt the pulsing warmth of Hannibal's come inside him, each spurt a hot, slick reminder of his dominance, and his hips moved with an almost brutal intensity, riding out the waves of Hannibal's orgasm, drawing out every last drop of pleasure. "Good boy," he whispered in a low satisfied murmur, his breath hot against Hannibal's ear. "You did so well."

Hannibal's body continued to tremble beneath him, the aftershocks of his orgasm leaving him weak and pliant. The sight drove Will wild, his own need mounting with every twitch of Hannibal's spent cock. Without wasting a moment, he pulled off Hannibal, feeling the desperate, empty sensation of Hannibal slipping free.

"You've been so good, baby, I think you deserve a reward," Will said as he stroked down Hannibal's chest, fingers swirling in the sweat pooled near his navel. "You want me inside

you?" Will's cock bobbed in emphasis, releasing a rush of pre-come.

At Will's words, Hannibal's reaction was immediate and intense. His eyes widened, darkening with renewed arousal, and a low, primal moan escaped his lips. His entire body shuddered, hips lifting off the bed as if to chase the promise of Will's touch. Despite his exhaustion, there was a wild, desperate hunger in his movements, straining against the clothing keeping his legs closed in blatant invitation, his breath coming in ragged, eager gasps.

Will took his time, savoring the moment as he pulled Hannibal's pants and briefs down past his thighs, leaving them discarded on the floor. Hannibal's legs were finally freed, and Will relished how he was spread out, vulnerable and exposed. He ran his hands up the inside of Hannibal's thighs, feeling the tension and anticipation coiled in his muscles.

With a swift, controlled movement, Will flipped Hannibal over onto his stomach. The restraints twisted with the motion, and Hannibal's breath hitched, a soft gasp escaping his lips as his body adjusted to the new position. Will took a moment to check the circulation in Hannibal's hands, ensuring the restraints weren't too tight. Satisfied that Hannibal was still comfortable, he let his hands roam possessively over Hannibal's back, tracing the lines of his spine, his touch both gentle and commanding.

"Is this what you want?" Will taunted, his voice dripping with dark satisfaction. He positioned himself behind Hannibal, his hands gripping Hannibal's hips, fingers digging into the soft flesh. The need to claim, to mark, to possess was overwhelming, and he could see the same raw desire mirrored in Hannibal's eyes.

"Yes, Will," Hannibal panted, his voice a desperate whisper. "Don't stop."

Will reached for the lube once more, slicking his fingers and pausing to admire the scene before him. Hannibal's body was a canvas of desire, every muscle taut with anticipation. He pressed a finger to Hannibal's entrance, teasing the sensitive skin before slowly pushing inside. Hannibal's body tensed, a soft moan escaping his lips as Will stretched him, preparing him for what was to come.

Will's touch was firm yet careful, his finger working with a deliberate precision. He didn't want to truly hurt Hannibal, but he did want him to feel every inch, every sensation. Hannibal's breath quickened with his need. Will added another finger, scissoring them to stretch him further, pointedly avoiding Hannibal's prostate.

"That's it," Will murmured, his voice a husky murmur of encouragement. "You're doing so well."

Hannibal responded with a wordless, desperate moan, his hips pushing back against Will's fingers. The raw need in his motions was unmistakable, a plea for the release only Will could provide. Will could feel the tight heat easing slightly, the readiness building.

He leaned in, his lips brushing against Hannibal's ear. "I'm going to take you hard, Hannibal. Make you feel every inch of me." The man beneath him whined as he rotated his neck to look back into Will's eyes. Will pulled his fingers out, yanking Hannibal's hips up and positioning

himself at his entrance. He was breathing hard, his cock still achingly hard and ready to be buried in Hannibal's tight heat. Will could see the need in Hannibal's eyes, the way his body trembled with every breath. The tight ring of muscle clenched around nothing, begging for the intrusion that was to come.

Will couldn't resist dragging his cock against Hannibal's slick entrance, teasing the sensitive skin, feeling the heat radiating from Hannibal's body. The slight whimper from Hannibal as he buried his head in the pillows once more, the way his hips arched back desperately, nearly drove Will over the edge. Hannibal's fingers clawed at the sheets, his body trembling with need. He spread his legs wider, offering himself up, his back arching even more as if trying to pull Will in. His head turned, a breathy moan escaping his lips, his eyes dark with lust as he looked back at Will, silently begging for more.

Will's hips stilled at Hannibal's moan, and his hand itched with the need to remind Hannibal who was in charge. Without warning, he delivered a sharp slap to one of Hannibal's ass cheeks. The sound echoed through the room, a stark contrast to the wet, desperate noises they had been making. Hannibal's body jerked, a gasp torn from his lips as the sting spread through his skin.

"Look at you, begging like a whore. I'll decide when you get fucked, not a moment sooner," his voice a snarl, low and commanding. The rich color spreading across Hannibal's ass captivated him. The sight was intoxicating–Will traced the outline of the red mark with his fingers, feeling the heat beginning to radiate from the skin, the contrast of his own cool touch sending shivers down his spine. His desire to bury himself in Hannibal's ass was forcefully eclipsed by the urge to see every inch of his backside bright red, the image pulling a groan from Will's chest.

"Baby," Will murmured as he calmed himself, his voice a blend of tenderness and command as he leaned forward. "Remember, you have a safe word. Use it if you need to." His breath was warm against Hannibal's nape, a gentle reminder amidst the intensity of the moment. Will brought a palm to the spot he had marked and gently rubbed, the touch both soothing and electrifying, grounding them in the moment while emphasizing the power dynamic at play.

Hannibal groaned, a deep, guttural sound that resonated through the room. "More, Will," he pleaded, his voice thick with desire. " *Please.* " The need in his tone was undeniable. With a wicked smile, Will didn't hesitate. He raised his hand again and brought it down on Hannibal's ass with a resounding slap, the sharp crack echoing in the room. The impact left another red mark, the heat of it spreading beneath his palm. Hannibal's body jerked, a choked moan escaping his lips as he arched his back, presenting himself even more eagerly.

"You wear my marks so well, darlin'." He slapped Hannibal's ass again, watching as the flesh rippled under the force, each strike drawing a louder, more desperate sound from Hannibal. The sight of the reddening skin, the feel of it warming under his touch, was breathtaking.

He alternated between sharp slaps and soothing caresses, his touch a blend of dominance and tender possession. Will's fingers traced the outlines of the handprints, feeling the raised, heated skin, his own arousal heightening with every touch. He brought his hand down again, harder this time, reveling in the way Hannibal's body responded. He could see the glistening

evidence of Hannibal's need, the way his skin flushed, and the small beads of sweat forming on his back. Each slap sent a surge of power and desire through Will, the control he had over Hannibal thrilling him to his core.

"You like that, don't you?" Will whispered, the satisfaction evident in his tone. "Marked by me. Every inch of you belongs to me." He leaned in, pressing his lips to one of the reddened spots, feeling the heat against his mouth. He nipped at the tender flesh, the act both loving and possessive, leaving small bites that would linger as reminders of this moment.

Hannibal's body shuddered with every mark, his breath coming in shallow, needy gasps, his hips pushing back, seeking more of Will's touch. "Yes," he groaned, his voice barely a whisper. "I love it… please, Will… more." Will's bites became more fervent, his teeth sinking into the flesh of Hannibal's ass and thighs over and over.

"You're mine," Will growled, his voice low and fervent. "Every mark, every bite, is a reminder of who you belong to." He licked over the reddened skin, savoring the taste of sweat and the subtle saltiness, a reinforcement of his claim.

Will pulled back slightly, admiring his handiwork: Hannibal's ass and thighs covered in a mosaic of red handprints and love bites. The visual confirmation of his dominance, the physical proof of his claim, sent desire and adoration surging through his veins. "Beautiful," he whispered, his voice thick with emotion. "You look so pretty like this."

But as much as Will was enjoying the marking, his own need was becoming unbearable. Every nerve in his body screamed for release, the tightness in his own groin demanding satisfaction. With a growl, Will gripped Hannibal's hips and thrust in, burying himself to the hilt in one powerful stroke. Hannibal's back arched, a guttural cry escaping his lips as he took all of Will. The tight heat around him was almost too much, the way Hannibal's body clenched and spasmed, milking his cock, sending waves of pleasure through him. Will paused, panting heavily, feeling the exquisite tightness enveloping him, the heat radiating from Hannibal's reddened ass.

The raw, primal connection between them, the feel of Hannibal's submission, pushed Will to the edge as he began to thrust, driven by an all-consuming need to claim and possess. Hannibal's back flexed and rippled with every thrust, his body arching instinctively, desperate for more, sending shivers of electric pleasure through Will. Each gasp and shudder from Hannibal, every twitch and contraction amplified the heat coiling low in his belly. Hannibal's breath came in ragged gasps, his hips pushing back, seeking deeper connection, and Will's fingers tightened their grip.

The wet sounds of their joining, the slap of skin against skin, filled the room, mingling with Hannibal's desperate moans. The heat and friction enveloped Will, his senses overwhelmed by the sensation of Hannibal's tightness. With every thrust, a wave of pure bliss coursed through him, radiating from his core and spreading outward, making his skin tingle and his breath hitch. Hannibal's head was turned to the side, mouth open in a silent scream, his breath coming in ragged gasps.

The power he felt, the control over Hannibal's pleasure and his own, was intoxicating. He could feel Hannibal clenching around him, each spasm drawing him deeper, each movement

sending sparks of ecstasy through his veins.

Hannibal was a mess of incoherent whimpers, his body trembling with the intensity of the sensations. Will knew he couldn't last much longer, but he was determined to get Hannibal to come again. He leaned down, his lips brushing against the nape of Hannibal's neck. "I want you to come again for me," he murmured, his voice a commanding growl as he adjusted the angle to brutally target Hannibal's prostate.

Hannibal yelped at the stimulation, choking on his breath. His eyes fluttered as he attempted to speak, the strain in his voice unmistakable. "Will, I… I don't think I can… not so soon," he gasped, his voice trembling.

Will's thrusts became more purposeful, each movement designed to coax every ounce of pleasure from Hannibal's body. "Yes, you can," he whispered, his tone a blend of encouragement and demand. "You're so good for me, Hannibal. You can do this. You can come for me again."

The desperation in both of them was tangible, the air thick with their shared need. Will's praise was like a lifeline for Hannibal, pulling him back from the brink of exhaustion. Hannibal's muscles tensed, his back arching subtly as if in reflex. His body quivered under Will's touch, as his hips began to move in rhythm with Will's thrusts, a clear sign of his desire to obey, to please.

Will's own desperation was a fierce, burning need. He could feel Hannibal's body tightening around him, the rhythmic clenching driving him wild. "Come on, Hannibal," he urged, his voice hoarse with the effort of holding off his own climax. "I need to feel you come around my cock, baby."

Hannibal's breath hitched, his body shuddering. The combination of Will's praise and the relentless stimulation pushed him closer to the edge. "Will… I… please," he begged, his voice cracking with raw need.

"That's it, Hannibal," Will whispered, his thrusts becoming more erratic, the pleasure almost too much to bear. "Come for me, darlin', I know you can."

Hannibal's body arched, muscles tensing as another guttural moan tore from his lips. His release hit with the force of a tsunami, his body convulsing with the intensity. Will felt each spasm ripple through Hannibal's frame, the rhythmic clenching around his cock sending shivers of ecstasy racing through him. Hannibal's eyes squeezed shut, his mouth falling open in a silent cry of bliss as he came hard, the hot spurts of his come soaking the sheets below him.

The raw, unfiltered pleasure on Hannibal's face, the way his back arched and his fingers dug into the sheets, drove Will wild with desire. With a final, powerful thrust, Will let himself go. His orgasm hit with the force of an explosion, the pleasure blinding and all-consuming. His body trembled, muscles tightening as he emptied himself deep inside Hannibal. The sensation of Hannibal's tight heat continuing to milk him, combined with the sight of his lover's spent form beneath him, heightened his climax to an almost unbearable intensity.

Will's moans mingled with Hannibal's, their combined sounds of pleasure filling the room. He felt the last shudders of Hannibal's orgasm coaxing every last drop of his own release, the intimate connection between them deepening with each shared moment of ecstasy. His vision blurred, the world narrowing down to the two of them and the overwhelming pleasure they shared.

Finally, spent and trembling, Will collapsed onto Hannibal, their bodies still intertwined. Their breaths came in ragged pants, their chests heaving with the effort to recover. The room was thick with the scent of sex, a heady reminder of their intense coupling. Will's body was slick with sweat, his skin pressed against Hannibal's, the afterglow of their passion a warm, comforting blanket.

Will's body thrummed with the aftermath of their intense fucking as the air, once thick with primal desire, now softened into a tender warmth. He gazed down at Hannibal, whose body lay utterly spent beneath him. Hannibal's eyes were half-lidded, his breaths coming in shallow gasps, his back heaving with exertion. The raw vulnerability in his expression tugged at something deep within Will.

Gently, Will eased out of Hannibal, his movements slow and deliberate, not wanting to add to Hannibal's overstimulated state. Hannibal's body twitched slightly at the loss, a soft whimper escaping his lips. Will leaned in, pressing a gentle kiss to his temple, his lips lingering for a moment, savoring the connection.

"Hannibal," Will murmured, his voice a soothing balm in the quiet room. "You okay?"

Hannibal's response was a barely audible hum, his eyes fluttering shut as he tried to gather the strength to answer. Seeing Hannibal so thoroughly wrecked, unable to form coherent words, filled Will with a sense of pride and tenderness. He knew he had pushed Hannibal to his limits, and now it was time to take care of him.

Will slowly untied the restraints, his fingers gentle and reassuring. He massaged Hannibal's wrists, easing the slight marks left by the bindings, his touch a silent promise of care. Hannibal's body relaxed under his ministrations, a soft sigh escaping his lips as the tension melted away.

Once the leather straps were discarded, Will lay back down next to Hannibal, pulling him into a tender embrace against his chest. "You did so well," Will whispered, his voice filled with affection. He stroked Hannibal's hair, his fingers combing through the damp strands with a tenderness that belied the intensity of their earlier encounter. "Just relax. I've got you."

Hannibal's eyes opened slightly, a glimmer of gratitude and adoration shining through the exhaustion as he looked up from his position on Will's chest. Will's heart swelled at the sight, the emotional release mingling with the physical. As he looked at Hannibal, Will felt a profound lightness wash over him, as if a heavy burden had finally been lifted from his shoulders. The anger and resentment that had simmered earlier in the evening had dissipated, leaving behind a serene clarity.

Will marveled at the transformation within himself. The fury and pain that had once threatened to consume him were now nothing more than distant memories, replaced by an

overwhelming sense of peace. He could feel the remnants of his anger dissolve, each breath he took seeming to expel the last traces of bitterness. In its place, there was only love–Will could admit it to himself now–pure and unadulterated, for the man lying beside him.

His gaze softened as he took in Hannibal's features, noting the subtle rise and fall of his back, the way his eyelashes fluttered against his cheeks, and the faint smile that played on his lips despite his exhaustion. Will's hand moved with a gentle tenderness, tracing the contours of Hannibal's face with the lightest touch.

A sense of awe filled Will as he realized the depth of his emotions. He had never felt so connected, so utterly intertwined with another person. The raw intimacy they had shared, the vulnerability they had exposed to each other, had forged an unbreakable bond. Will's heart beat steadily, each pulse a reminder of the love that now filled every corner of his being.

He leaned down, his lips brushing against Hannibal's forehead in a soft kiss, a silent vow of devotion. The warmth of Hannibal's skin against his own, the gentle rhythm of their breathing in sync, created a cocoon of safety and affection around them. Will's eyes closed briefly, savoring the tranquility of the moment, feeling the deep connection that transcended words.

Opening his eyes, Will continued to tenderly stroke Hannibal's hair, his fingers weaving through the strands with a soothing rhythm. Each caress was an unspoken declaration, a promise of his unwavering presence. He felt Hannibal's contented sigh against his chest, the subtle rise and fall of his lover's body as they lay entwined.

Will knew he needed to get up to tend to the aftermath of their joining. His body protested the idea of moving away from Hannibal's warmth, but he knew it was necessary. Reluctantly, he shifted slightly, intending to rise, but Hannibal's hand tightened around his arm, a soft, panicked noise escaping his lips.

"Shh, it's okay," Will murmured, leaning down to press another gentle kiss to Hannibal's temple. "I'll be right back, I promise. Just getting something to clean us up." His voice was a soothing murmur, each word a reassurance.

Hannibal's grip loosened slightly, though his eyes remained half-lidded and filled with a hint of residual fear. Will offered him a reassuring smile before swiftly getting up, moving with a quiet urgency. The cool air of the room contrasted sharply with the warmth they had shared, and he hurried to gather the items he needed.

Returning to the living room, Will saw the tension ease from Hannibal's frame as he approached. Hannibal's eyes tracked his every movement, and Will felt another surge of tenderness as he knelt on the bed beside him once more. "See? Told you I'd be right back," he said softly, offering Hannibal a gentle smile.

Will began to clean Hannibal with gentle, loving strokes, the warm cloth wiping away the sweat and evidence of their passion. Each touch was a caress, a silent affirmation of their bond. He moved with deliberate care, ensuring that every stroke of the cloth was tender, soothing Hannibal's skin and calming his mind.

The scent of the ointment mingled with the lingering musk of their lovemaking, creating an intimate, comforting atmosphere. Will applied the ointment with careful precision, his fingers gliding over Hannibal's reddened skin, offering both relief and a wordless apology for the intensity of their encounter. Will paused, admiring the marks he had left behind—the vivid red handprints from the spanking and the scattered love bites that dotted Hannibal's flesh. Hannibal's body relaxed further under his touch, a soft sigh escaping his lips as the ointment soothed the soreness.

As he worked, Will spoke softly, his words a comforting murmur. "You did so well, baby. You were beautiful." He kissed the base of Hannibal's spine, his lips brushing against the flushed skin. "I'm so proud of you."

Hannibal's lips curved up at the corners, the expression beautiful on his thoroughly wrecked face. The combination of exhaustion and satisfaction painted a serene picture, his eyes still mostly closed and glazed with pleasure. Will crawled back up the bed and pressed a gentle kiss to Hannibal's lips, the tenderness of the gesture washing over them both. The touch was light, yet filled with an intimacy that spoke volumes, their breaths mingling as they shared the quiet moment.

Overwhelmed by the need to reassure Hannibal, Will settled in with Hannibal against his chest once more, his eyes searching Hannibal's face, taking in every detail. "Hannibal," Will began. Hannibal's eyes opened, looking up to meet Will's with a quizzical expression. Will's heart ached, knowing that the depth of Hannibal's emotions mirrored his own. He took a deep breath, feeling the weight of his words. "I forgive you," he whispered, voice thick with emotion. "I will always forgive you."

At Will's words, Hannibal's grip tightened around him, pulling Will in closer as if seeking to merge their very beings. His eyes shimmered with unshed tears, the relief–and love, that was love in Hannibal's eyes–clear in his gaze. Will's own throat tightened, the unspoken words hovering on the tip of his tongue. He wanted to say it, to declare the love that had grown between them, but the words caught in his throat. Instead, he leaned down, pressing his forehead against Hannibal's. "I'm here." Will's voice was a soft caress. "Always."

Hannibal's eyes closed briefly, a single tear slipping down his cheek. He pressed a shaky kiss to Will's lips, the touch desperate and tender. The emotion in that kiss spoke volumes, a silent plea for understanding, for acceptance. Will responded in kind, his kiss a reassurance, a promise that they were in this together.

Their bodies remained entwined, the warmth of their connection enveloping them in a cocoon of safety and love. Hannibal's hands roamed over Will's back, his touch a mix of need and reverence. The tenderness in each caress, each whispered word, solidified the bond they had forged, a bond that transcended the darkness of their past.

"I see you, Hannibal," Will murmured, his voice a gentle promise. "Always."

Hannibal's response was a soft, contented sigh, his body relaxing into Will's embrace. The room was filled with the sound of their quiet breaths, the air heavy with the scent of sex and the lingering warmth of their shared passion.

Will’s eyelids grew heavy, the comforting weight of Hannibal’s arm draped over him lulling him into a state of blissful drowsiness. He nuzzled closer, feeling Hannibal’s steady heartbeat, the rhythmic rise and fall of their breathing synchronizing in perfect harmony. The warmth of their shared body heat surrounded him, a gentle hum of satisfaction buzzing through his veins.

His thoughts began to blur, the edges of his consciousness softening as sleep beckoned. The faint rustle of sheets, the soft murmur of Hannibal’s breath against his ear, created a lullaby that eased him further into the embrace of slumber. Just as he teetered on the edge of sleep, he thought he heard Hannibal’s voice, a tender whisper brushing against the fringes of his awareness.

“Aš tave myliu,” Hannibal murmured, the foreign words wrapping around Will like a gentle caress. The meaning was lost in the fog of his drowsiness, but the warmth and sincerity behind them resonated deep within him. Too far gone to respond, Will surrendered to the pull of sleep, a soft smile playing on his lips as he drifted into a peaceful slumber, swaddled in the love and safety of Hannibal’s embrace.

Chapter End Notes

WHAT DO Y'ALL THINK???? come yell about it with me in the comments or on tumblr @graciereadshannigram :)

also! this chapter came a couple days earlier, but we'll be back to the regularly (ish) scheduled posting, so don't expect another chapter until the end of next week (July 11th ish)

love y'all <3

Promises & Plans

Chapter Notes

beta'd by Jay_Is_A_Rat (and during their birthday week, too???), all remaining mistakes are my own :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will woke up to the tantalizing aroma of freshly brewed coffee and the savory scent of an omelet wafting through the air. His eyes blinked open, adjusting to the soft morning light filtering through the curtains of his bedroom. The familiar surroundings of his house in Wolf Trap grounded him, but the absence of the warm body next to him sent a pang of disappointment through his chest. He had hoped to wake up wrapped in the warmth of Hannibal's presence, to share the quiet intimacy of the morning after such an intense night. The empty space beside him felt like a loss, a reminder of how fleeting those moments of closeness could be.

As Will inhaled deeply, savoring the comforting aromas, his concern began to rise. The previous night had been a whirlwind of emotions and physical intensity. By the end of the evening, Hannibal had been thoroughly wrecked, his usual composure shattered. Will vividly remembered Hannibal's nonverbal state, how he had clung to Will, seeking comfort and grounding. The image of Hannibal, so vulnerable and dependent, lingered in Will's mind, evoking a tender protectiveness within him. The thought of Hannibal pushing himself too soon worried him, a knot of anxiety tightening in his chest.

Will sighed, pushing himself up on his elbows, ready to swing his legs out of bed and go find Hannibal in the kitchen. The concern for Hannibal's well-being nudged him into action, urging him to ensure that everything was alright. Just as he was about to stand, Hannibal's head poked through from the door to the kitchen, a soft smile on his lips.

Hannibal's appearance was a sight that reassured and delighted Will in equal measure. He was dressed in borrowed clothes, the sweatpants and T-shirt fitting snugly on his larger frame, outlining the contours of his body in a way that made Will's heart skip a beat. The sight of Hannibal in his casual clothes, so different from his usual tailored attire, was oddly endearing.

Hannibal stepped fully into the room, his movements uncharacteristically hesitant. His shoulders were slightly hunched, and he held onto the door frame with one hand, almost as if seeking support. His eyes met Will's with a flicker of shyness, a rare vulnerability that softened his usually composed demeanor. "Good morning, Will," he said, his voice gentle, carrying an undertone of uncertainty.

Will's lips curled into a warm smile, the drawl in his voice thick and unmistakable as he replied, "G'mornin', darlin'." The intimate casualness of Hannibal's attire and his shy demeanor sent a wave of relief and affection through Will. He took a moment to appreciate Hannibal's form, the way the borrowed clothes accentuated his frame, and the almost bashful way he stood there, waiting for Will's acknowledgment.

"I've made coffee, and the eggs are almost ready," Hannibal said softly, his voice carrying a soothing warmth that wrapped around Will like a comforting embrace. "And I cleaned up the spilled whiskey."

Hannibal turned to head back to the kitchen, but Will's pout stopped him in his tracks. "It's early, come back to bed," Will complained, his voice taking on a playful, almost whiny tone. He reached out, his fingers grazing the edge of the comforter, begging for Hannibal to join him once more.

Hannibal paused, the subtle stiffness in his movements not escaping Will's keen observation. The way he held himself, a slight wince quickly masked by his usual grace, told Will everything he needed to know. A mental note was made to check in on Hannibal's well-being, but for now, Will focused on the present moment, his heart swelling with affection.

A genuine smile spread across Hannibal's face, softening his features and chasing away the remnants of shyness. It was a rare and beautiful sight, one that made Will's heart flutter. "I'll be right back," Hannibal promised, his voice carrying a tenderness that matched the smile on his lips.

Will's pout turned into a grin, the warmth of Hannibal's smile spreading through him like the morning sunlight filtering into the room. He watched as Hannibal moved back towards the kitchen, each step measured and deliberate, the subtle signs of his discomfort still present but overshadowed by the affection in his eyes.

As Will lay back against the pillows, waiting for Hannibal to return, his mind drifted to the events of the previous night. The warmth of his feelings for Hannibal still glowed in his chest, a comforting reminder of their newfound intimacy. Satisfaction and fulfillment coursed through him, both physically and emotionally. The night before had been a significant milestone in their relationship, a raw and honest exploration of their desires and vulnerabilities. Everything was out in the open now, leaving no room for hidden fears or unspoken truths.

Will savored the memory of Hannibal's body responding to his every touch, the way his own body had felt so perfectly in tune with Hannibal's. The sensation of their shared pleasure, the way Hannibal had surrendered completely to him, was a heady mix of power and connection. It wasn't just about the physical act; it was about the trust that had been exchanged, the barriers that had crumbled. For the first time, Will felt truly seen and understood by Hannibal, and he relished the sense of belonging that brought.

The satisfaction wasn't solely rooted in the physical release, though that had been intense and deeply gratifying. It was in the way they had communicated without words, their bodies speaking a language of their own. Will had always known that Hannibal was complex, multifaceted, but seeing him laid bare, both physically and emotionally, had given Will a

profound sense of fulfillment. He had touched something deep within Hannibal, something raw and real, and in doing so, he felt like he had also uncovered a hidden part of himself.

Will's thoughts lingered on the tender moments that had followed their climax, the way Hannibal had clung to him, utterly spent and yet completely trusting. That vulnerability had been a gift, a rare glimpse into the depths of Hannibal's emotions. It was a side of Hannibal that few, if any, had ever seen, and Will felt a swell of pride and protectiveness at being the one to witness it. The experience had solidified his resolve to be there for Hannibal, to care for him in every way he needed.

As he lay there, a fragment of memory surfaced, something Hannibal had said as they drifted off to sleep. The words were hazy, just out of reach, but Will felt a nagging sense of their importance. He furrowed his brow, trying to grasp the elusive memory. It teased at the edges of his consciousness, a whisper that refused to clarify. Will's mind sifted through the events of the night, replaying their heated exchanges, the murmurs of comfort, and the raw honesty that had passed between them. He closed his eyes, hoping the darkness would help him focus.

He could almost hear Hannibal's voice, soft and worn with exhaustion, but the exact words remained stubbornly vague. There was a tone, though, a note of something tender and earnest that resonated deeply within Will. It lingered in his mind, this half-remembered snippet, hinting at a deeper truth or confession. His fingers drummed absently against the pillow as he concentrated harder, willing the memory to surface.

With a sigh, Will admitted defeat for now. The words would come back to him, he was sure of it. In the meantime, he made a mental note to ask Hannibal about it later, to unravel this small mystery. The curiosity mingled with the satisfaction and fulfillment that still glowed in his chest, adding a layer of intrigue to the morning's tranquility.

The soft clinking of dishes from the kitchen pulled Will from his reverie, and he smiled to himself, feeling the warmth of his emotions settle even more comfortably in his chest. Will's thoughts were interrupted by the sound of soft footsteps approaching the bedroom. He turned his head to see Hannibal reappear in the living room, carrying a breakfast tray with the practiced grace that was so characteristic of him. Will couldn't help but raise an eyebrow at the sight. He didn't even remember owning a breakfast tray, let alone knowing where it might be stored.

Hannibal caught the look of surprise and amusement on Will's face and responded with a small, knowing smile. "Good morning again, Will," he said, his voice gentle and warm. He set the tray down carefully on the edge of the bed. "I found this in one of your cabinets. After a thorough wash, it was good as new."

Will chuckled, shaking his head in disbelief. "Of course you did," he muttered, a grin spreading across his face. "Leave it to you to find something I didn't even know I had."

Hannibal's eyes twinkled with amusement as he settled himself on the bed beside Will. "I thought it might be a nice touch," he said, gesturing to the tray laden with a steaming omelet, freshly brewed coffee, and a small bowl of fruit. The presentation was impeccable, as was to be expected from Hannibal.

Will's heart swelled with affection, noting the care and effort Hannibal had put into making their morning special. "You didn't have to go to all this trouble," he said softly, his voice filled with genuine appreciation.

"It was no trouble at all," Hannibal replied, his smile gentle. "I wanted to do something for you, after..." Hannibal trailed off–a rarity for him– and there was a hint of vulnerability in his tone, a quiet acknowledgment of the emotional and physical intensity they had shared.

Will reached out, his fingers brushing against Hannibal's hand. "Thank you," he said, his voice sincere. "This means a lot to me."

Hannibal's eyes softened, and he gave a small nod. "You're welcome, Will."

Will let out a teasing grumble, a playful glint in his eyes. "I'm grateful, really, but I wish you'd stayed in bed with me. Waking up next to you would've been the perfect start to the morning."

Hannibal chuckled, the sound warm and rich. "I promise I'll stay next time," he said, his tone light but his eyes filled with genuine affection.

Will's heart swelled at the promise, the intimacy of their exchange wrapping around him like a comforting blanket. They settled into a comfortable silence as they began to eat, the only sounds in the room the clinking of cutlery and the occasional murmur of appreciation.

The food was, unsurprisingly, perfect. The omelet was fluffy and flavorful, the coffee rich and aromatic. Will was starving, and while he knew he would have eaten anything at this point, he could still tell that Hannibal had outdone himself. Will found himself savoring every mouthful, appreciating the perfect balance of flavors.

Suddenly, a bolt of panic struck Will. "Oh fuck, the dogs!" he blurted out, his fork clattering onto his plate as he scanned the room expecting the usual morning chaos. The house was unusually quiet, but before his worry could escalate, he noticed a smirk playing at the edges of Hannibal's mouth.

He frowned slightly, curiosity piqued. "Did you let them out already?" he asked.

Hannibal nodded, his smile widening. "Yes, I took care of it."

Will raised an eyebrow, surprised but also deeply appreciative. The dogs were an integral part of his morning routine, and their absence now was both strange and a relief. He felt a warmth spread through him, a mix of gratitude and affection. Hannibal's thoughtfulness touched him deeply. Will was still surprised by how willingly Hannibal cared for his dogs, understanding the importance they held in his life. It wasn't just about the convenience of having the morning quiet; it was about Hannibal seamlessly integrating into his world, showing love and consideration for the things that mattered most to Will.

As soon as Hannibal had the breakfast tray out of the way, Will reached out and grabbed his wrist, gently but firmly pulling him closer. Hannibal allowed himself to be drawn in, a soft, almost shy smile gracing his lips.

Will pulled Hannibal into his arms, their bodies fitting together with an ease that felt both surprising and inevitable. The sensation of Hannibal's solid form against him, the way their limbs tangled naturally, sent a wave of contentment washing over Will. He inhaled deeply, breathing in the subtle, clean scent of Hannibal's skin mixed with the faint aroma of breakfast.

They settled into a comfortable position, Hannibal's head resting against Will's shoulder. Will's fingers traced lazy patterns on Hannibal's back, the touch both soothing and intimate. Each stroke of his hand was a silent declaration of affection, a promise of care and protection.

Will's heart swelled as he held Hannibal close, the emotional release from the previous night mingling with the physical warmth of their bodies. He was struck by how right this felt, how perfectly Hannibal fit in his arms, as if they were made for each other. The rough texture of Hannibal's stubble against his neck, the gentle rise and fall of Hannibal's chest as he breathed, the way their bodies molded together–all of it felt like coming home.

As they lay entwined, the morning's quiet warmth surrounding them, Will's thoughts drifted back to the previous night. The memory of Hannibal's whispered words nagged at him, a fragment of sound that he couldn't quite place. He took a deep breath, gathering the courage to ask.

"Hannibal," Will began, his voice soft but curious. "What did you say last night, just as I was falling asleep?"

Hannibal's body tensed immediately, shattering the relaxed state they'd shared moments before. Will felt the shift, the way Hannibal's muscles tightened and how he subtly tried to pull away. Hannibal's eyes darted around the room, avoiding Will's gaze. He fidgeted slightly, a small movement of his fingers against Will's arm, a sign of his unease. The subtle tension in Hannibal's posture, the way his breath hitched almost imperceptibly, spoke volumes.

Will tightened his embrace, trying to anchor Hannibal in the moment. He could sense Hannibal's internal struggle, the way he grappled with the unexpected vulnerability. "Hey," Will murmured, his voice a soothing balm against Hannibal's unease. "It's okay. You don't have to tell me right now."

Hannibal's eyes flickered, a brief flash of relief mingling with the lingering tension. Will's heart ached with tenderness and understanding. He gently cupped Hannibal's cheek, guiding his gaze back to him. "Really, it's okay," he repeated, his voice a soft murmur. "We can talk about it whenever you're ready."

Hannibal's shoulders relaxed incrementally, the rigid line of his back easing under Will's gentle reassurance. He still didn't make direct eye contact, his gaze dropping to Will's shoulder, but the fidgeting slowed. Will felt a warm rush of protectiveness, the need to shield Hannibal from the discomfort that seemed to rattle his normally unshakeable demeanor.

He brushed his thumb gently along Hannibal's cheekbone, feeling the subtle roughness of stubble against his skin. "We're in this together, okay?" he whispered, his breath warm against Hannibal's ear. "There's no rush."

Hannibal's breathing steadied, the tension slowly draining from his frame. He nodded slightly, the movement hesitant but accepting. Will pulled him closer, pressing a soft kiss to his temple, feeling the subtle shift in their connection. In the quiet that followed, the intimacy of their shared space wrapped around them like a comforting blanket. Will's fingers traced soothing patterns on Hannibal's back, each stroke a silent promise of understanding and patience.

Will was still basking in the warmth of their embrace, every touch and breath a reaffirmation of their connection. Hannibal was nestled against him, their bodies fitting together in a way that felt seamless and right. Will's senses were acutely attuned to every detail–the steady rise and fall of Hannibal's chest, the soft brush of his hair against Will's cheek, the gentle rhythm of their synchronized breathing.

And yet, Will couldn't ignore the subtle signs of discomfort in Hannibal's body language. As he held Hannibal close, he felt a slight rigidity in his frame, a tension that seemed to surface with each shift in position. Hannibal's movements were careful, almost too careful, as if he were trying to mask his discomfort.

When Hannibal adjusted his weight, Will felt a small wince ripple through his body. The normally fluid grace with which Hannibal moved was replaced by a careful, deliberate manner, as though he were navigating the space around a hidden injury. His fingers, usually so deft and sure, hesitated slightly as they brushed against Will's side, the touch lacking its usual confident pressure.

Will's eyes flicked to Hannibal's face, observing the slight furrow in his brow, the way his lips pressed together momentarily before relaxing. It was in these minute expressions that Will read Hannibal's discomfort, the silent language of his body communicating what words did not.

Concern flared in Will's chest, a protective instinct urging him to ensure Hannibal was truly okay. He shifted slightly, his hand moving to Hannibal's hair, fingers threading through the soft strands with a gentle, soothing rhythm. The act was as much for his own reassurance as it was for Hannibal's comfort.

"Hannibal," Will began softly, his voice a tender murmur in the quiet room. "How are you doing?"

He felt the immediate response in Hannibal's body–a slight stiffening, the brief tightening of muscles that spoke of discomfort not just physical but emotional as well. Hannibal's shoulders tensed, and his eyes momentarily avoided Will's, flicking to the side before returning.

Will's touch remained gentle, his fingers continuing their slow, calming path through Hannibal's hair. He leaned in closer, his voice a whisper of reassurance. "Shh, I just wanted to make sure you're not in any pain."

The gentle rhythm of Will's fingers seemed to ease the tension, and gradually, he felt Hannibal's body begin to relax. The stiffness ebbed away, replaced by a tentative trust, a

willingness to let down his guard. Hannibal's head tilted slightly, leaning into Will's touch, his eyes closing as if surrendering to the comfort it provided.

"I may not be able to sit comfortably for a few days," Hannibal admitted, a hint of color rising in his cheeks. "But I'll be okay."

Will nodded, his fingers continuing to stroke Hannibal's hair in a soothing rhythm. "A reminder," Will murmured, his voice low and filled with a mix of tenderness and something deeper, more primal. "Of how you took everything I gave you so perfectly last night."

The words hung in the air, each one carefully chosen, wrapping around Hannibal like a caress. Will watched as a faint blush crept up Hannibal's neck, his normally composed demeanor cracking under the weight of the praise. The sight was captivating–Hannibal, usually so controlled, now so vulnerable and affected.

Hannibal's eyes fluttered closed, his breath hitching slightly as he absorbed Will's words. His body, still pressed against Will's, shivered subtly, a response that was as much about the emotional impact of the praise as it was about the physical sensations.

Will's hand moved from Hannibal's hair to his cheek, the touch gentle but charged with meaning. His thumb brushed over Hannibal's lower lip, feeling the soft texture there. "You were incredible," he continued, his voice a hushed whisper that seemed to resonate in the stillness of the room. "The way you submitted to me…"

Hannibal's lips parted slightly under Will's thumb, a barely audible sigh escaping. Will could see the conflict in his eyes when he opened them again–the embarrassment mingled with something more primal, more instinctive. It was arousal, simmering just beneath the surface, an undeniable response to the tender but erotic words.

The air between them grew thicker, charged with a potent mix of affection and desire. Will leaned in closer, his lips brushing against the shell of Hannibal's ear, his breath warm and intimate. "You made me so proud, Hannibal. Seeing you like that, giving yourself to me so completely… it means everything to me."

Hannibal's reaction was immediate. His body tensed briefly, then melted against Will, the faintest tremor running through him. Will's keen eyes didn't miss the way Hannibal's pupils dilated, the subtle shift in his breathing, the slight arch of his back pressing them closer together. Hannibal's hand, which had been resting on Will's side, moved tentatively, fingers tracing a light path over Will's skin.

Will felt the shift, the way Hannibal's body began to respond more openly, the slight movements that spoke of his growing desire. He leaned in, capturing Hannibal's lips in a slow, tender kiss, feeling the way Hannibal responded, tentative at first, then more assured. The kiss was a promise, a reassurance, a continuation of the intimacy they had shared the night before.

Will felt the gentle tremble in Hannibal's breath as they pulled back from the kiss. The spark of arousal in Hannibal's eyes had grown, but there was still that underlying tension, the

remnants of the previous night's intensity. Will's hand continued to stroke gently through Hannibal's hair, his touch reassuring.

"Why don't we take a shower together?" Will suggested softly, his voice a mix of affection and practicality. "The warm water might help with your sore muscles."

Hannibal's breath hitched slightly at Will's words, his eyes fluttering closed for a moment as he absorbed the suggestion. He let out a soft, appreciative hum, a subtle shiver running through his body in response to the thought of warm water easing his aches.

Will pressed another kiss to Hannibal's forehead, a tender gesture that spoke volumes. "Come on, darlin'," he murmured, the southern drawl thickening his words with a familiar warmth. "Let's get you taken care of."

Hannibal's eyes opened, filled with a mixture of gratitude and affection. He nodded slowly, his movements deliberate as he began to push himself up from the bed, clearly trying to mask any discomfort. Will watched him, a wave of satisfaction washing over him. Some part of him was sorry that Hannibal was hurting this morning, but a deeper part reveled in it. The sight of Hannibal, moving with a stiffness that spoke of the intensity of their night together, sent a thrill of possessive pride through Will. He had done that to him, and Hannibal had begged for it, surrendering completely to Will's control.

The memory of Hannibal's desperate pleas and the way he had responded to every touch made Will's heart race. He felt a surge of heat, a primal satisfaction at seeing the evidence of their shared passion. Hannibal stood, and Will couldn't help but let his eyes linger on the taut lines of his lover's body, the way his muscles moved under the borrowed clothes.

As they walked from the bed to the bathroom, the atmosphere between them shifted. Will's hand lingered on Hannibal's lower back, guiding him with a possessive touch that promised more than just comfort. Hannibal's breath quickened, the anticipation humming between them like a live wire.

Will reached the shower first, turning the knobs to get the water to the perfect temperature. The air quickly filled with steam, the sound of the running water a steady backdrop to their growing desire. Will's eyes roved over Hannibal's form, taking in the way the borrowed clothes clung to his frame before he gently peeled them away. Each touch was deliberate, a slow unveiling that heightened the anticipation. Hannibal's body responded, a shiver running through him as Will's fingers brushed against his skin.

They stepped under the warm spray together, the water cascading over their bodies, adding a sheen to Hannibal's already flushed skin. The steam rose around them, creating an intimate haze that only intensified their closeness. Will's hands moved with a newfound urgency, not just soothing but caressing, exploring every inch of Hannibal's body with deliberate, possessive touches. His fingers traced the lines of Hannibal's muscles, lingering over sensitive spots, eliciting soft gasps and sighs that echoed in the tiled space.

Will pressed himself against Hannibal's back, his lips finding the spot just below Hannibal's ear. "I want to make you feel good, darlin'," he murmured, his voice thick with promise. The warm water poured over them, but it was the heat between their bodies that truly ignited the

moment. Will's palms roamed over Hannibal's chest, fingers teasing his nipples before sliding down his abdomen. The feeling of Hannibal's smooth, wet skin under his touch sent a shiver of anticipation through Will.

Hannibal's breath hitched as Will's hand ventured lower while the other continued to explore, his body instinctively arching into Will's touch. Will smiled when he found that Hannibal was completely hard for him. " *Yes* , Will," he moaned, the words heavy with need.

Will's grip was firm but tender, stroking Hannibal's length with a practiced rhythm. "You're so beautiful like this," Will whispered, his lips grazing the shell of Hannibal's ear. Hannibal's groan in response was low and guttural, his body arching into Will's touch, seeking more.

With a smirk, Will turned Hannibal to face him, their eyes locking in a heated gaze. The water streamed down Hannibal's face, making his features look even more chiseled and alluring. Will couldn't resist capturing Hannibal's lips in a deep, demanding kiss, their tongues tangling in a dance of lust and affection. The taste of Hannibal was intoxicating, a heady mix of soap and his unique flavor, driving Will wild with desire.

Will broke the kiss and dropped to his knees, the steam swirling around him like a misty veil. He looked up at Hannibal with a dark, hungry expression before taking him into his mouth. The sensation of Hannibal's hard length sliding past his lips, the taste of him, sent a surge of arousal straight to Will's groin. He sucked eagerly, his tongue swirling around the tip, teasing the sensitive underside, savoring the salty tang of pre-come.

Will's hands gripped Hannibal's hips, fingers digging into the flesh as he took him deeper, his throat relaxing to accommodate the full length. Hannibal's head fell back, a raw sound escaping his lips, the sound vibrating through the steamy air. Will's mouth worked with expert precision, hollowing his cheeks as he sucked, his tongue flicking and swirling over the most sensitive spots.

Hannibal's hands found their way into Will's wet hair, gripping tightly as he whimpered, the sound echoing off the tiles. "Will," he gasped, his voice thick with need. Will hummed in response, the vibrations sending shivers of pleasure through Hannibal's body. He loved the way Hannibal's cock twitched in his mouth, a physical manifestation of the control he had, the power he wielded.

"I've got you, baby." Will's free hand cupped Hannibal's balls, rolling them gently, adding another layer of sensation. He could feel the tension building in Hannibal's thighs, the way his hips began to thrust involuntarily, seeking more.

Will could feel every twitch, every pulse, as Hannibal's control slipped away. The ragged, unfiltered sounds of Hannibal's pleasure filled the shower, mingling with the patter of water. The feeling of Hannibal fucking his mouth, the taste and scent of him, was overwhelming, pushing Will closer to his own edge. His own arousal was a throbbing ache, his cock hard and leaking, but he was focused entirely on Hannibal's pleasure, the way his body responded to every touch, every suck.

Sliding around to Hannibal's ass, mindful of the tenderness, Will pulled him closer, encouraging the deep, rhythmic thrusts. He hollowed his cheeks again, creating a tight, wet

heat that had Hannibal gasping, his fingers tightening in Will's hair. Will's tongue worked in tandem with his movements, flicking and swirling, teasing the sensitive underside of Hannibal's cock with each bob of his head.

Hannibal's moans grew louder, more desperate, his hips moving with a frantic urgency. "Will, I'm close," he managed to gasp, his voice strained with the effort of holding back. But Will didn't slow down; if anything, he sped up, his mouth working Hannibal with an intensity that left no room for restraint.

Will took him deeper, his nose brushing against the soft skin at the base of Hannibal's cock. He swallowed around him, the tight, wet heat driving Hannibal wild. The taste, the texture, the sheer act of submission and control–Will was lost in it, each desperate sound from Hannibal spurring him on.

When Hannibal came, it was with a cry of pure ecstasy, his body shuddering as he spilled into Will's mouth. Will swallowed eagerly, savoring the taste, the sensation of Hannibal's release filling him. He continued to suck and lick, drawing out every last drop, his eyes locked onto Hannibal's face, drinking in the sight of his pleasure.

Hannibal's knees nearly gave out, and Will steadied him, his hands gentle yet firm on Hannibal's hips. He finally released Hannibal's spent cock, pressing a tender kiss to the tip before rising to his feet. Without hesitation, Will leaned in, capturing Hannibal's lips in an absolutely filthy kiss. It was all tongue and teeth, their mouths moving together in a heated, desperate rhythm. The taste of Hannibal's release still lingered on Will's tongue, adding an extra layer of intensity.

Hannibal responded eagerly, his hands sliding up to grip Will's shoulders, pulling him closer, as if he could fuse their bodies together. When the kiss finally broke, both of them were panting, their breaths mingling in the steamy air.

"I want your cock inside of me," Hannibal demanded, his voice rough and filled with raw need.

Will's eyes darkened with arousal at Hannibal's words, the pulse of his own need throbbing in his veins. "No, baby, I don't want to hurt you," he protested, but his voice lacked conviction, trembling with the desire coursing through him. His hands couldn't help but caress Hannibal's sides, feeling the shivers of pleasure that ran through his lover's body.

"Fuck me, Will," Hannibal growled, the words leaving no room for argument. His eyes were fierce, blazing with a desire that sent a shiver down Will's spine. The raw demand in Hannibal's voice was intoxicating, making Will's resistance crumble.

Will's breath hitched as he pressed Hannibal's chest against the shower wall once more, the water cascading over their heated bodies. "You're so needy," he murmured, his voice a low, seductive rumble. "So wanton." His hands trailed down Hannibal's body, one settling on his hip while the other teased his entrance, fingers slick with water and the remnants of soap.

Hannibal's response was a broken gasp, his body arching into Will's touch, desperate for more. "Only for you," he panted, the words a promise, a confession.

Circling Hannibal's entrance with his fingers, Will teased him before slowly pushing inside, feeling the tight heat envelop him. Hannibal's gasp of pleasure was music to his ears, the way his body opened up, so trusting, so needy. "Fuck, Hannibal," Will groaned, his arousal spiking at the sight and sound of his lover's surrender.

Another finger joined the first, stretching Hannibal gently, preparing him for what was to come. Hannibal's pleasure-filled sounds echoed in the shower, his body pushing back against Will's hand, seeking more. Will leaned in, his lips brushing against Hannibal's ear. "This is mine," he whispered, the words a possessive growl.

Hannibal's eyes fluttered closed, a shiver running through him as Will's fingers moved inside him, stretching, preparing. Will added a third finger, scissoring them gently, his other hand stroking across Hannibal's lower back, offering comfort and grounding.

Hannibal's breaths were broken, his body responding eagerly to every touch. "Will, please," he begged, desperation clear in his voice. The way his body quivered, the soft, needy sounds spilling from his lips, all of it drove Will wild with need.

Finally, Will couldn't wait any longer. He withdrew his fingers, positioning himself at Hannibal's entrance. "Ready for me, darlin'?" he whispered, his breath hot against Hannibal's ear.

"Yes, Will, please," Hannibal begged, his voice strained with the need to be filled, to be taken.

Will pushed forward slowly, the head of his cock breaching Hannibal's tight heat. The sensation was overwhelming, the tightness, the warmth, the way Hannibal's body welcomed him. "Fuck, Hannibal," Will gasped, gripping Hannibal's hips tightly. He leaned forward, his lips brushing against Hannibal's ear, his voice a low, husky whisper. "I'm going to take my time with you, take you completely apart with how good I can make you feel."

Hannibal shuddered at Will's words, his body responding to the promise of prolonged pleasure. Will began to move, slow and deliberate, each thrust deep and precise. He roamed his hands over Hannibal's back, down to his ass, squeezing and caressing, feeling every twitch and shiver. The water cascaded over them, adding a slickness to their movements, enhancing the eroticism of the moment. Will's fingers traced the lines of Hannibal's muscles, lingering on the sensitive spots, eliciting gasps and whimpers that echoed in the tiled space.

"You're so perfect for me," Will murmured, his voice filled with a mix of admiration and lust. He pulled almost all the way out before plunging back in, the sensation making Hannibal's legs tremble. Will's pace was unhurried, each thrust designed to draw out the pleasure, to push Hannibal to the brink without letting him fall over.

Hannibal's breaths came in ragged pants, his hands bracing against the wall for support. "Fuck," he gasped, his voice thick with need. The sound of Hannibal swearing ignited something primal within Will, sending a surge of satisfaction through him. He changed the angle of his thrusts, hitting that perfect spot inside Hannibal that made him see stars. Hannibal's cries of pleasure grew louder, filling the shower and mingling with the patter of water.

Sliding his hands down to grip Hannibal's hips, Will guided him, urging him on. He could feel the tension in Hannibal's body, the way his muscles tightened with every thrust. "That's it, baby. Take it. Take all of me," Will purred.

Hannibal's hips began to move in sync with Will's, his body seeking the pleasure that Will so expertly delivered. The water continued to pour over them, adding a slick, sensual quality to their movements. Will's thrusts grew deeper, more insistent, each one sending shockwaves of pleasure through Hannibal's body.

"Fuck, Will," Hannibal gasped, his voice breaking with the intensity of his arousal. His body trembled, the buildup of pressure inside him nearing its peak. "I'm close," he panted, the words a desperate plea for release.

Will's response was a low, approving hum. "Good. Let me feel you come apart," he said, his voice thick with lust. He increased the tempo of his thrusts, each one harder and faster, driving Hannibal to the brink. The sensation of Will's cock moving inside him, combined with the relentless pressure on that perfect spot, sent Hannibal over the edge.

With a strangled cry, Hannibal came, his body convulsing with the force of his orgasm. The tight clench of his muscles around Will's cock pushed Will over the edge as well, his own release following in a powerful, blinding wave. They stayed like that for a moment, the water washing over them, cooling their heated skin.

Slowly, Will pulled out, his hands still gentle on Hannibal's hips, supporting him as they both came down from their high. Turning Hannibal to face him, Will captured his lips in a softer, more tender kiss, the passion still there but now tempered with a deep, abiding affection. Their breaths mingled in the steam-filled air, each kiss a silent affirmation of their bond. "Let's finish getting cleaned up," Will murmured, his voice gentle and filled with the promise of more moments like this, of a connection that transcended the physical.

Freshly showered, Hannibal and Will moved into the bedroom to get dressed. Will rummaged through his closet, pulling out clothes for himself. Hannibal, still wrapped in a towel, watched with a bemused expression as Will handed him a pair of jeans and a shirt. "These might be a bit tight on you," Will said, a hint of a smile playing on his lips.

Hannibal took the offered clothes, the amusement in his eyes evident. "I suppose we'll have to make do," he replied, slipping into the jeans. They were indeed snug, the fabric hugging his frame more than usual. Will couldn't help but admire the way they fit, the sight stirring something warm and possessive in his chest.

After they were both dressed, Hannibal rolled up the sleeves of Will's shirt, the cuffs too short for his longer arms. "Not bad," Hannibal commented, buttoning up the front. Will stepped closer, adjusting the collar with a tenderness that made Hannibal's breath hitch.

With their clothing sorted, they moved into the kitchen. The aroma of fresh coffee lingered in the air, blending with the scent of the damp earthiness carried on their skin from the shower. Will reached for the coffee pot, the smooth, warm handle grounding him as he poured them

both a second cup. The familiar ritual brought a sense of normalcy, a momentary anchor in the sea of upheaval.

Will handed Hannibal a mug, their fingers brushing briefly. He could feel the warmth of the ceramic seeping into his hands, a welcome contrast to the cool morning air. They settled at the kitchen table, the silence between them comfortable but charged with unspoken thoughts.

As he took a sip, the rich bitterness of the coffee comforted him, but his mind wandered back to the revelation from the night before. The idea of Abigail being alive was astonishing, the emotions that had surged in the heat of the moment now settling into a more profound sense of disbelief and confusion. His heart ached with a strange mix of hope and fear, the coffee's warmth doing little to soothe the turmoil inside.

He glanced at Hannibal, who was watching him with a calm expression as he drank his own coffee. The sight of him in Will's borrowed clothes brought a fleeting smile to his lips, but it quickly faded. The weight of the situation pressed down on him, memories of the last time he saw Abigail surfacing with relentless clarity. He remembered the haunted look in her eyes, the fear that had twisted her features. He had hallucinated killing her, the blood on his hands so vivid, so real. Even though he now knew it had been an illusion, a trick of his tortured mind, the emotional impact lingered. He had thought he'd known Hannibal had been the real killer, but the image of Abigail's fear, her eyes wide and pleading, was the primary emotion he grappled with.

Abigail had been terrified of him. That was the thought that gnawed at him, the one that he couldn't shake. She had seen him as a threat, a danger. The realization cut deeper than any physical wound. He had completely forgiven Hannibal, had come to terms with the monstrous complexity of their relationship, but Abigail's fear, her betrayal, was a ghost that refused to be laid to rest.

Will's chest tightened as he relived the moment, the helplessness, the consuming sense of failure. He had wanted to protect her, to be her savior, but in the end, he had been the monster in her eyes. The guilt was a heavy shroud, suffocating and relentless.

He took a deep breath, the air feeling thick and heavy in his lungs. He wanted to believe that seeing Abigail again could mend the broken pieces, but the fear of facing her, of seeing that fear in her eyes once more, was paralyzing.

Hannibal reached across the table, his hand resting lightly on Will's. The touch was gentle, grounding. "You're thinking about Abigail," Hannibal said softly, his voice cutting through the haze of Will's thoughts.

Will nodded, his throat tight. "I can't stop," he admitted, his voice rough with emotion. "The last time she saw me, she was so scared. I hallucinated killing her. She was terrified of me."

Hannibal remained calm, pouring each of them another cup of coffee, the steam curling lazily upward as he handed a mug to Will.

Will hesitated, staring into the dark liquid. His thoughts were tangled, the revelation about Abigail still heavy in his mind. As the emotions from the previous night and that morning

began to settle, the realization of Abigail's survival resurfaced with renewed intensity. He was nervous and happy, but also scared about the uncertainty it brought.

He remembered the last time he saw her, the hallucination where he believed he had killed her. The memory sent a shiver down his spine, the fear and guilt still raw. He wanted to believe Hannibal, but the idea of seeing Abigail, of facing her, was almost too much to bear. Yet, there was also a flicker of hope and happiness that she was alive and well, living a life he thought had been stolen from her.

Finally, he took a deep breath and broke the silence. "Is she really in Italy?" he asked, his voice barely above a whisper.

Hannibal nodded, his expression earnest. "She is, Will. Safe and well. Would you like to see her? We can video call, so you can hear from her yourself."

The offer made Will's heart race. The thought of seeing Abigail, of facing her after everything, made his chest tighten with a mix of fear and longing. "I… I'm not ready for that," he admitted, his voice shaky. The memory of his hallucination, of believing he had killed her, was too raw, too recent.

Understanding flickered in Hannibal's eyes. He reached out, placing a reassuring hand on Will's shoulder. "That's alright. How about I show you some pictures instead?"

Will nodded, relief and anxiety mingling in his gut. Hannibal pulled out his phone and navigated to his gallery. He handed the device to Will, who took it with trembling hands. As he swiped through the images, he saw Abigail smiling with friends, looking happy despite the obvious absence of one ear.

The sight triggered a surge of emotions. Tears welled up in Will's eyes, spilling over before he could stop them. His throat tightened, words escaping him. He reached out, needing the comfort and solidity of Hannibal's presence.

Hannibal responded immediately, wrapping his arms around Will and pulling him close. They clung to each other, both of them shaking slightly with the force of their emotions. Will buried his face in Hannibal's shoulder, feeling the steady rise and fall of his chest, the warmth of his body.

Hannibal's hand moved to the back of Will's head, fingers threading through his hair in a soothing gesture. He murmured soft, indistinct words, the sound vibrating through his chest and into Will's very core. The intensity of their embrace mirrored the tumult of feelings crashing through Will–grief, relief, and an overwhelming sense of connection.

This moment was what Will had yearned for in the darkest corners of his mind: not just stability or comfort, but a profound sense of being seen and understood. Feeling Hannibal's arms around him now, offering a steadfast anchor, touched something deep inside him. The warmth of Hannibal's embrace, the solidity of his presence, brought a kind of solace that Will had almost forgotten was possible. Part of him still craved reassurance, a silent plea for someone to hold him and promise that they would face the darkness together. Will tightened

his grip on Hannibal, his fingers digging into the fabric of his shirt as if anchoring himself to this reality.

Despite the swirling chaos of his emotions, there was an unexpected comfort in their closeness–a sense of unity and shared strength. It wasn't just about facing the future together; it was about the unspoken promise of mutual understanding and support. It felt like a new chapter in their fraught relationship, one where trust and vulnerability could coexist with the darkness that had always surrounded them. In Hannibal's arms, Will found a strange, poignant solace, an affirmation that despite everything, they could find a way forward together.

Will parked his car and trudged toward Hannibal's office building, each step heavier than the last. It had been a trying day at work with Jack. The cold evening air bit at his skin, making his limbs feel leaden and stiff. His eyes felt gritty and dry, the day's fatigue pressing down on him like a physical weight. As he neared the building, the warm glow from Hannibal's office windows cast a golden halo against the darkening sky, a beacon of comfort in the cold.

Pushing the door open, he was enveloped by the rich, comforting scent of leather and old books. The warmth inside wrapped around him like a soft blanket, easing the chill from his bones. Each detail–a well-worn chair, the neatly arranged bookshelves–brought a sense of grounding and relief. Will closed his eyes, drawing in a deep breath, letting the soothing atmosphere wash over him and temporarily lift the weight of the day's exhaustion.

Hannibal greeted him warmly, his eyes lighting up as Will entered the room. "Will," he said, his voice smooth and welcoming.

The exhaustion of the day seemed to evaporate as Will met Hannibal's warm gaze. He felt an overwhelming desire to close the distance between them, to find solace in Hannibal's embrace. Will's steps were slow, deliberate, each one carrying the weight of his longing. His eyes flicked over Hannibal's face, taking in the subtle curve of his lips, the familiar lines that held so much comfort.

Without a word, he moved closer, his breath hitching slightly. Will's hands found their way to Hannibal's shoulders, his touch tentative at first, then firmer as he drew Hannibal closer. He could feel the steady rise and fall of Hannibal's chest, a grounding rhythm that soothed the storm inside him.

As their lips met, Will's eyes fluttered shut, the kiss a tender connection that spoke of his need for comfort and closeness. Hannibal's lips were warm and soft, providing a welcoming warmth that countered the chill that had seeped into Will's bones throughout the day. He melted into the kiss, his hands moving to thread through Hannibal's hair, pulling him closer, seeking more of the warmth and reassurance that Hannibal offered.

Will broke the kiss, his breath mingling with Hannibal's, and rested his forehead against Hannibal's shoulder. He buried his face in the crook of Hannibal's neck, inhaling the familiar, comforting scent. "Hey," he murmured softly, his voice barely above a whisper.

Hannibal's hand moved to stroke the back of Will's head, his touch gentle and soothing. Will exhaled, his face still nestled against Hannibal's neck, the simple movement conveying the exhaustion he felt. He didn't have the energy for words, the weight of the day pressing down on him like a heavy blanket.

Hannibal pulled back slightly, enough to look into Will's eyes, his gaze filled with understanding and warmth. "Would you like a glass of wine?" he asked, his tone inviting and reassuring.

Will nodded again, the thought of a glass of wine and Hannibal's company promising a brief respite from the day's burdens. The gesture was small, but it held a world of unspoken gratitude and relief. Hannibal's hand lingered on his back for a moment longer, offering silent support before he moved to pour the wine.

Will walked over to his usual chair in Hannibal's office, the familiar leather creaking slightly as he settled into it. Will's eyes followed Hannibal as he headed to a polished cabinet against the wall. He opened it to reveal an array of fine wines, selecting a bottle with practiced ease. Will watched as Hannibal uncorked it, the rich aroma of red wine filling the room. Will couldn't help but appreciate the elegance of his movements, the way his hands deftly handled the bottle and glass.

Hannibal poured a glass, his movements precise and deliberate, not needing to say a word. His suit fit him perfectly, the dark fabric hugging his frame in a way that accentuated his lean, powerful build. Will's gaze lingered on the broad shoulders, the clean lines of the suit, and the thought that Hannibal was his, that he was the one who could strip away that immaculate exterior, sent a thrill through him. He wanted more than just the private moments; he wanted to claim Hannibal where others could see, to mark him as his own in every way.

Hannibal turned, carrying the glass of wine towards him, and Will savored the kiss they had shared earlier, appreciating Hannibal's hands and how he looked in a suit. Hannibal was his. "I wish I could kiss you like that in public," Will murmured, his voice low with a hint of frustration.

Hannibal looked at him thoughtfully, a tacit understanding passing between them. The constraints of their reality were clear, but the longing for something more was palpable.

Hannibal handed Will a glass of wine, their fingers brushing briefly, sending a familiar thrill through Will. Will took a sip, enjoying the rich flavors. "Long day?" Hannibal asked, his voice smooth and inviting.

Will nodded, feeling the weight of the day pressing down on him. He sighed, the exhaustion evident in his posture. "I just… I wish I could kiss you like that in public," he repeated, the words carrying a deeper ache. "Claim you where everyone can see."

Hannibal nodded, understanding the unspoken plea. "I know," he said softly, his eyes filled with empathy. There was a brief, unspoken understanding that passed between them, acknowledging the complexities and dangers of Will's life. The silence stretched out, filled with the weight of unspoken words and shared emotions.

Hannibal's gaze lingered on Will for a moment longer, the wheels in his mind clearly turning. "Actually, Will," he began, his tone casual but carrying an undercurrent of something more, "I have an extra ticket to the opera weekend after next. I was planning to go, but I have nobody to accompany me. Would you consider joining me?"

Will raised an eyebrow, the offer catching him off guard. "The opera?" he echoed, a hint of skepticism in his voice.

Hannibal nodded, a small, knowing smile playing at the corners of his lips. "Yes, the opera. It's a public event, but one where displays of affection are subtle and refined. I thought it might be… a way for us to spend time together, without attracting undue attention."

The implication was clear, and Will felt a flicker of warmth in his chest. Hannibal was offering a compromise, a way for them to be together in public, to claim each other in a quiet, understated manner. It wasn't the same as openly declaring their relationship, but it was a step, a gesture that meant more than words could convey.

Will considered the offer, the idea of attending a high-society event like the opera both foreign and intriguing. "I've never been to the opera," he admitted, his tone softening. "But I think… I'd like to go with you."

Hannibal's eyes brightened with pleasure, his smile deepening. "I'm glad to hear that, Will," he said, the warmth in his voice unmistakable. "I think you'll find it a fascinating experience."

As the initial excitement settled, a new wave of anxiety began to creep into Will's thoughts. He realized he had no idea what the dress code for the opera might be, and the prospect of dressing up for such an event was daunting. His usual wardrobe of flannel shirts and jeans hardly seemed appropriate. The thought of navigating the nuances of high-society fashion made his stomach twist with unease.

He cleared his throat, trying to keep his voice steady. "What… what should I wear to the opera? I don't exactly have a wardrobe full of suits," he confessed, a touch of self-consciousness seeping into his words.

Hannibal's smile remained gentle, understanding. "Don't worry, Will. A tux is traditional, but the important thing is that you feel comfortable. I can help you find something suitable if you'd like."

Will nodded, appreciating Hannibal's support, but he couldn't shake the feeling of being an imposter. Standing next to Hannibal, who always looked effortlessly refined, made his insecurities flare. He knew he belonged with Hannibal, but the thought of high society's judgment weighed on him.

Will knew where he stood with Hannibal. He was the only person to truly be Hannibal's equal, the only person who could break Hannibal down and open, revealing his deeply guarded vulnerability. With Hannibal, Will felt seen and understood in a way that no one else ever could. But the rest of the world wouldn't see that. They'd see the rough edges, the

awkwardness he couldn't entirely mask. They'd wonder why someone like Hannibal would choose someone like him.

Hannibal's keen eyes read the insecurities flitting across Will's face, the slight furrow of his brow, the tension in his posture. He reached out, his fingers brushing gently against Will's forearm, grounding him with a touch. "Will," he said softly, his voice filled with understanding. "If it would help, I'd be more than happy to take you to my personal tailor. He's quite skilled and will ensure you feel both comfortable and confident."

Will's initial reaction was a mix of surprise and reluctance. The idea of being fitted for a suit by Hannibal's tailor seemed both intimidating and oddly intimate. He looked into Hannibal's eyes, seeing the sincerity and the quiet encouragement there. The offer wasn't just about the clothes–it was about easing Will's anxiety, making him feel at home in an unfamiliar world.

"I don't know, Hannibal," Will began, his voice tinged with uncertainty. "I've never… I mean, I've always just worn what I had. Going to a tailor, it feels…"

Internally, Will's thoughts churned with anxiety. He had no idea what to expect from a tailor's visit. The very idea of stepping into that refined world was intimidating. It wasn't just about the clothes; it was about the unspoken rules and expectations he feared he'd misstep around. Growing up as he did, tailors were for the wealthy, for people in a completely different sphere. That mindset clung to him, making him feel out of place before he even set foot in the shop. What if he didn't know how to act? What if he made a fool of himself? The thought of being scrutinized, of silent judgments being cast, had a headache brewing. Hannibal navigated these environments effortlessly, and the last thing Will wanted was to seem like he didn't belong by his side.

Hannibal's grip on his arm tightened slightly, a reassuring gesture. "It's simply about ensuring you feel your best," he said gently. "I want you to be comfortable, to enjoy the evening without any added worries. Besides," he added with a small, teasing smile, "I think you might find the experience more enjoyable than you expect."

Will sighed, his fingers lightly drumming against the armrest. "You know I've never thought about clothes like that. They've always just been practical."

Hannibal leaned in slightly, his gaze intent. He didn't need to say a word; the look he gave Will was enough. The challenge in Hannibal's tone ignited a spark in Will, dissipating some of his anxiety. He met Hannibal's eyes, the hint of a smile playing at his lips, feeling a surge of genuine confidence. The familiar thrill of rising to a challenge coursed through him, mingling with the warmth of Hannibal's touch and the rich scent of the wine. He straightened up slightly, his shoulders relaxing as he embraced the new dynamic.

"Well then," Will said smoothly, his voice steady and confident, "tell me when and where I need to be." The words rolled off his tongue with an ease that surprised him, the confident tone feeling more natural than he had expected.

Hannibal's smile widened, a glint of approval in his eyes. "Next Monday," he replied, his voice carrying a note of anticipation. "My tailor's shop, downtown. I'll send you the address."

Will's mind began to churn, considering how long Hannibal might have been waiting for this moment. He could almost picture Hannibal's subtle satisfaction at seeing him in clothes that matched the elegance of their surroundings. A small smile tugged at the corners of his mouth at the idea of surprising Hannibal, imagining the look in his eyes when he saw Will in a perfectly fitted tuxedo.

He looked up, his smile widening. "You're planning on coming with me to the fitting, right?"

Hannibal's eyes twinkled with a hint of amusement, his expression softening. "Naturally, Will," he replied smoothly.

Will felt a wave of relief wash over him, the anxiety that had been churning in his stomach easing at Hannibal's reassurance. "Good," he said, nodding slowly. "I think it'll be easier with you there. You know, following your lead."

Hannibal's smile deepened, a mixture of pride and affection in his gaze. "I'll be there to ensure everything goes smoothly. Besides," he added, his voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper, "I'm quite looking forward to seeing you in a perfectly tailored tuxedo."

Will chuckled, the sound easing the remaining tension in his body. He could already feel the smooth fabric of the tuxedo, the way it would hug his form and accentuate his frame. The thought of stepping into Hannibal's world with him, of meeting his expectations and perhaps even exceeding them, was exhilarating.

"Deal," he said, his voice filled with quiet determination. "It's a date."

Hannibal's eyes twinkled with a hint of mischief as he set his glass down. "And why don't you come over for dinner afterwards?" he suggested, his tone casual but carrying an unmistakable undertone of invitation. "If you're inclined, you could stay the night."

Will felt a flutter of anticipation at the suggestion. The thought of ending his evening in the comforting intimacy of Hannibal's home was undeniably appealing. He allowed a small smile to play on his lips as he met Hannibal's gaze. "I'd like that," he replied, his voice soft but filled with genuine warmth. "I'll be there."

Will took another sip of his wine, letting the rich, velvety flavors wash over his palate. The warmth of the alcohol spread through him, soothing the frayed edges of his nerves. As he leaned back in his chair, he allowed himself to fully appreciate the calming effect of the evening.

The conversation with Hannibal, even the part where he had agreed to be fitted by a tailor and attend the opera, had worked wonders on his tension. The gentle banter, the understanding in Hannibal's eyes, and the promise of a shared experience had lightened the weight of his day.

He glanced at Hannibal, who was watching him with a quiet intensity, a small, knowing smile playing on his lips. The sight of him, so effortlessly composed, brought a sense of peace to Will's turbulent mind. The day's frustrations, the weariness from his work, all seemed to fade into the background, replaced by a sense of contentment and anticipation.

The promise of next week's adventure, of stepping into Hannibal's world on his own terms, added a thrill to the mix. It was a reminder that, despite the challenges he faced, there were moments of joy and connection to be found. And in this moment, with the wine warming him from the inside out and Hannibal's presence anchoring him, Will felt a rare sense of tranquility.

In this space, with Hannibal, he found a sanctuary from the chaos of his mind and the demands of his work. And for now, that was enough.

Will sat across from Jack in his office, the dim lighting casting long shadows that mirrored the tension in the room. The weight of another grueling day hung heavily in the air. At least it was Friday. He kept his expression neutral, carefully controlling his body language, aware that any slip could betray his true allegiance. Will's own fatigue pressed down on him, but it was nothing compared to the weariness etched into Jack's features; his exhaustion was palpable, the lines on his face etched deeper than usual.

Jack's usually sharp eyes were dulled by a mixture of sleepless nights and constant worry, his shoulders slumped as if bearing an invisible but immense burden. The room's oppressive silence was broken only by the occasional rustle of papers on Jack's desk, each sound amplifying the tension between them.

"Any progress with Lecter?" Jack asked, his voice weary but edged with hope.

The weight of Jack's expectation was almost suffocating, the unspoken pressure to provide answers that could alleviate at least one of Jack's many worries. Yet, the words felt heavy on his tongue, each one a potential spark in the volatile mix of their shared history and current frustrations.

"Not much to report," he said slowly, as if weighing each word carefully. "The more time I spend with him, the more I question my initial conclusions. I'm starting to wonder if I was wrong about him being the Ripper." He paused, meeting Jack's gaze with a steady, searching look. "You were quick to doubt me before," he added, his tone measured. "I understand not wanting to make the same mistake, but… maybe I've been wrong about him all along."

The frustration was evident on Jack's face as his jaw tightened, the muscles working beneath his skin. His voice, usually controlled, rose a notch, reverberating off the office walls. "We don't have the luxury of doubt, Will," he snapped, leaning forward, his presence looming larger. "We need something concrete."

He punctuated his words with a sharp gesture, his hand slamming down on the desk, the sound a harsh echo in the tense silence. The veins in his neck stood out, a physical manifestation of his barely contained anger, his eyes boring into Will with an intensity that demanded results.

Will leaned back in his chair, maintaining his outward calm while inwardly, a hot spike of irritation surged through him. As far as Jack knew, Will was giving this his all, and the lack of trust chafed. His hands clenched subtly under the desk, the muscles in his jaw tightening as

he bit back a retort. The frustration simmered beneath his calm exterior, a storm waiting to break.

Jack looked worn down, shadows under his eyes betraying sleepless nights. Bella's worsening condition was taking its toll, and Will couldn't help but feel a pang of empathy, despite his contempt for the man. The conflicting emotions churned within him, the urge to lash out warring with a reluctant understanding of Jack's own struggles.

"I know it's difficult," Will said softly, almost sympathetically. "But I've been getting clearer about who Hannibal really is, especially now that I'm not clouded by encephalitis."

Jack's eyes flashed with a mix of emotions–hope flickering momentarily before giving way to frustration and desperation. His posture stiffened, and his voice tightened as he asked, "What do you suggest?"

Will considered his words carefully, his mind working through how to present his plan in a way that wouldn't raise Jack's suspicions. He needed to seem genuinely doubtful, just cautious enough to make it believable. "Hannibal invited me to the opera. I think it's a good idea to go. Maybe it'll get him to trust me enough to confess something. It's a long shot, but it's worth trying."

Jack's expression hardened, skepticism etched into the lines of his face. "You think he'd confess at the opera?" he asked, his voice dripping with doubt.

Irritation flickered beneath Will's skin, but he kept his tone even. "Not directly, no," he admitted. "But it's about building trust, getting him to lower his guard. It's a long-term strategy, not a quick fix."

Jack's eyes narrowed, suspicion mingling with concern. "You're getting close to him, Will. Too close. It's dangerous."

Will felt a surge of acidic amusement at Jack's words. He thought sarcastically, A little too late for that, Jack. He's never been safer from Hannibal than he is now. Will held Hannibal's leash firmly in his grip, a power shift that Jack couldn't even begin to comprehend.

Bitterness flooded his mouth as he scoffed. "That's never stopped you before, Jack." He leaned back in his chair, knowing that Jack couldn't argue with him.

Jack looked ready to yell at him again, his jaw tightening, his eyes flashing with a mix of frustration and anger. Will braced himself for the outburst, the tension in the room thickening like a storm about to break.

But then, to Will's surprise, Jack let out a laugh, the sound incongruous in the heavy atmosphere. The unexpected levity cut through the tension, offering a brief respite from the charged emotions. Will watched Jack, noting the weariness that even laughter couldn't mask. The deep lines etched into Jack's face, the shadows under his eyes, all spoke of the burdens he carried.

"You're right," Jack admitted, a little sheepishly. "It hasn't."

Will felt caught between empathy and his own contempt for the man. He knew Jack was under immense pressure, but it didn't lessen his resentment. The man before him was both a mentor and an obstacle, a figure Will had once looked up to but now saw as a hindrance to his own path.

"Will Graham at the opera," Jack mused, shaking his head with a hint of amusement. "I'd pay to see that."

As they continued their conversation, Will's mind wandered. He considered his feelings toward Jack, the simmering anger that sometimes boiled over into murderous urges. The thought of eliminating Jack if he ever posed a threat to him or Hannibal was disturbingly appealing. He wouldn't go out of his way to kill Jack, but if Jack ever posed a threat to him or Hannibal, Will knew he wouldn't hesitate. The thought was both liberating and unsettling.

Jack's laughter brought him back to the present. "You in a tux, mingling with the elite. Now that's a sight."

Will forced a chuckle, the sound hollow. "Yeah, a real sight." But as he left Jack's office, the weight of his true allegiance settled heavily on his shoulders. He had chosen his side, and it wasn't with the FBI. The thought of revealing his loyalty to Hannibal, of claiming him publicly, excited him. But for now, he had to play the game, keep the facade. One day, though, he promised himself. One day.

Chapter End Notes

so, i'm less than thrilled with this chapter, but can't exactly put a finger on it, just happy to have it done and posted! next week, let's get our boys ready for the opera <3

if you enjoyed, please drop a comment (they mean the world to me) or come find me on tumblr (@graciereadshannigram) – my asks are always open for y'alls sweet and unhinged messages!!

Comfort in the Silence

Chapter Notes

beta'd by EnmitiesSaddestGlare and Jay_Is_A_Rat, they are both absolutely wonderful <3

rebloggable tumblr chapter post here

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The weekend had passed in a blur of mundane tasks and quiet moments at his home in Wolf Trap. He had been so wrapped up in Hannibal that it was nice to get some time to himself. The solitude provided a welcome respite, a chance to reconnect with the simpler aspects of his life, to recharge his already limited battery. He had made the dogs more food, the familiar routine of chopping vegetables and mixing meat giving him a sense of normalcy. The kitchen filled with the comforting scent of simmering broth, and the dogs watched him eagerly, their tails wagging in unison.

In the afternoons, he spent some time fishing, the serene stillness of the water offering a meditative escape. The rhythmic casting of his line, the gentle splash as it hit the surface, and the quiet patience of waiting for a bite all worked to soothe his restless mind. The cool breeze off the water carried the earthy scent of the riverbank, mingling with the crisp, fresh air of the countryside.

Between these moments of tranquility, Will delved into some preliminary research for a new paper he hoped to eventually publish. The topic, “Forensic Entomology in Urban vs. Rural Settings,” intrigued him, offering a fresh challenge that felt like returning to his roots. He pored over recent studies, noting the variations in insect activity and decomposition rates between different environments. As he read through case studies and environmental data, Will felt a familiar spark of intellectual curiosity. It was invigorating to focus on his original interests again, to immerse himself in the meticulous world of forensic entomology.

Despite these distractions, the anticipation for his appointment with the tailor tugged at his thoughts, making it difficult to concentrate fully on his work. The lights overhead were bright and artificial, casting a sharp glow over his desk. Will thought that he should get a lamp for more diffused lighting, something warmer and more inviting than the harsh fluorescence that seemed to emphasize the late hour and his growing impatience. The faint hum of the air conditioner was the only sound in the room, a constant backdrop to his growing impatience.

Will fidgeted with the stack of assignments in front of him, his fingers idly shuffling through the papers he had just finished grading. The mundane task did little to distract him from the nerves bubbling under the surface. He could feel the tightness in his shoulders, the slight clench of his jaw, all signs of his eagerness to escape the confines of his office

As he read through the comments he had scrawled in the margins, he couldn't help but feel a mix of frustration and resignation. Some of his students showed genuine promise, their insights sharp and their analyses thoughtful. But far too many seemed disengaged, their work lacking depth and enthusiasm. The disparity was glaring, a reminder of the challenges he faced as an educator.

"The best and brightest, indeed," Will muttered to himself, a touch of sarcasm coloring his tone. He shook his head, setting the graded papers aside and leaning back in his chair. The leather creaked softly under his weight, the familiar sound grounding him momentarily.

His thoughts drifted to the upcoming appointment, a mix of anxiety and excitement churning in his gut. He wasn't entirely sure what to expect, but trusted Hannibal to take the lead and guide him through the experience with his usual grace and confidence. Driven by impatience, Will stood up, and a nervous energy hummed under his skin as he gathered his things. As he reached for his overnight bag, already packed with a change of clothes and essentials for staying at Hannibal's, a flutter of eagerness coursed through him. The thought of spending the night in the warmth and comfort of Hannibal's home added a layer of excitement to his nerves.

Mentally calculating that he would only be fifteen minutes early if he left now, Will zipped up his bag, slinging it over his shoulder, and took a deep breath. The anticipation of the fitting, combined with the promise of an evening at Hannibal's, filled him with a determined resolve. Just as he approached the door, Jack appeared in the doorway. Will's internal reaction was immediate and unfiltered: *Are you fucking kidding me?*

The sight of Jack was irritating Will more and more these days. He struggled to remember a time when he had trusted Jack, when Jack had assured him that he was bedrock, someone Will could lean on. The memory was distant and hazy, almost like a dream that fades upon waking. Now, Jack's presence felt like an intrusion, a reminder of the widening chasm between them.

"Heading out, Will?" Jack's voice was casual, but his eyes held that familiar, scrutinizing intensity.

Will took a deep breath, forcing himself to maintain his composure. "I was… I have an appointment with Hannibal's tailor to be fitted for the opera," he explained, hoping his irritation was well-masked.

Jack blinked at Will in shock, then laughed, the sound unexpected and almost jarring in the quiet hallway. "I wanted to get your opinion on this profile, but it can wait until tomorrow," Jack said, shaking his head as if amused by his own surprise. "Go on, get out of here and make your appointment."

Will was honestly surprised at Jack's behavior. *Since when has he let me leave work without some sort of guilt-trip?* He paused, a flicker of disbelief crossing his features. Jack was notorious for pushing his team to the brink, especially when it came to anything related to the Ripper. This sudden leniency was almost unsettling.

Will resisted the urge to rib Jack for his out of character laxness, but he knew better than to push his luck. Of course, Jack would support anything Will said he had to do if it led to catching the Ripper. Still, the unusual display of understanding was hard to reconcile with the Jack Crawford he knew. As Will prepared to leave, he felt a pang of regret. He had forgotten how likable Jack could be when he wasn't laser-focused on work. They used to be friends, after all. The memory of shared laughs and mutual respect momentarily softened Will's usually guarded demeanor. It was hard to reconcile those memories with their current strained relationship.

"Thanks, Jack," Will managed, his tone neutral. "I'll see you tomorrow."

Jack nodded, a rare, almost paternal smile on his face. "Enjoy yourself, Will. And good luck with the fitting."

Will offered a tight smile in return before turning on his heel and heading down the corridor. The brief exchange left him feeling off-balance, a strange mix of relief and suspicion gnawing at him. It was a rare thing for Jack to show such leniency, and while Will was grateful for the reprieve, he couldn't shake the feeling that there was more to it.

Will walked briskly to his car, the cool evening air wrapping around him like a cloak. The familiar sight of his car, parked under the shade of a tree, brought a sense of comfort. He slipped inside, the leather seats creaking softly under his weight. The car smelled faintly of coffee and the earthy scent of the dogs, a grounding mix that helped ease the tension from his encounter with Jack.

He took a moment to settle in, adjusting the rear view mirror and checking the time. Ninety minutes. He'd better get started if he wanted to be on time. The engine roared to life with a turn of the key, and Will eased the car out of the parking lot, merging onto the road that would take him to the city.

As Will merged onto the highway, the rhythmic thrum of the tires on the pavement provided a steady backdrop to his thoughts. The prospect of attending the opera with Hannibal was already intriguing, but as he drove, he found himself contemplating ways to make the evening even more interesting. He imagined Hannibal's reaction to seeing him in a perfectly fitted tuxedo, the appreciation in his eyes, and the possessive pride that would undoubtedly follow. The thought was intoxicating, sending a thrill through Will's veins.

Why not up the stakes a little? Will's mind began to churn with possibilities. The idea of catching Hannibal off guard was too tempting to resist. He considered the subtle ways he could shift the evening in his favor, ways to make Hannibal's meticulously planned outing unexpectedly tantalizing.

He imagined himself brushing a hand across Hannibal's arm, leaning in a fraction closer than necessary, the scent of cologne and closeness filling the air between them. He could see the flicker of surprise and delight in Hannibal's eyes, the brief moment where his control slipped. Will reveled in the thought of being the one to provoke such a reaction, to see Hannibal affected and off-balance.

The opera itself held possibilities, too. Will could picture the grandeur of the venue, the opulence of the surroundings. They would be surrounded by an audience absorbed in the performance, leaving moments of intimacy for them to exploit. He could whisper something in Hannibal's ear, something innocent on the surface but layered with deeper meaning. The dark theater would provide cover for fleeting touches, each one sending a jolt of electricity through their bodies.

At the thought of a dark theater, Will had an idea. He openly grinned to himself, allowing a snort of amusement out into the car. He was going to be in Baltimore, anyway, he might as well do some shopping.

Will pulled up to the curb, his eyes scanning the surroundings as he parked in front of the tailor shop. The storefront was undeniably upscale, exuding an air of exclusivity and refinement. The exterior was immaculate, with polished windows that gleamed in the late afternoon light, each one displaying mannequins dressed in suits that screamed sophistication. Their impeccable tailoring was evident even from a distance, each piece meticulously arranged to catch the eye of those discerning enough to appreciate true craftsmanship.

A discreet sign above the door read simply, "Tailor," in elegant, understated lettering, and a small plaque below it announced, "Appointment Only." The message was clear: this was not a place for casual shoppers. Will felt a spark of anxiety flare in his chest as he took in the scene, a sense of being out of his depth settling over him. This was a world far removed from his usual haunts, and the thought of navigating it alone was daunting.

He stepped out of his car, the cool air hitting him as he closed the door behind him. His eyes continued to scan the area, searching for a familiar face. For a moment, the anxiety tightened its grip, his mind racing with thoughts of what lay ahead. But then he saw him—Hannibal, standing just outside the shop, his posture relaxed and his presence commanding as always.

Hannibal's eyes met his, and a warm smile spread across his face, easing the tension that had built up in Will's chest. He walked toward Hannibal, the familiar figure, a beacon of calm in the otherwise intimidating environment. As he approached, Hannibal extended a hand in greeting, his expression one of genuine pleasure at seeing Will.

"Shall we?" Hannibal asked, his voice smooth and inviting, a subtle undertone of reassurance in his words.

Will nodded, a small smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. "Yeah, let's do this," he replied, his voice steadier now. The anxiety that had threatened to overwhelm him began to recede, replaced by a growing sense of excitement.

They stepped toward the entrance together, the glass door reflecting their figures back at them. Will took a deep breath, feeling the solid presence of Hannibal beside him as they crossed the threshold into the tailor's shop. The rich scent of cedar and high-end cologne enveloped them, a sensory reminder of the luxury and exclusivity of the place.

Inside, the shop was just as elegant as the exterior suggested. Dark wood paneling and plush carpeting created an atmosphere of quiet opulence, and the racks of fabrics and suits lining the walls spoke of meticulous craftsmanship and attention to detail. Will felt the initial spark of anxiety flare up again, but it was quickly quelled by the familiar touch of Hannibal's hand on his back, guiding him forward with a reassuring pressure.

"Good afternoon, Dr. Lecter," a voice called out, drawing their attention. An older, rotund man with a thick Italian accent and a no-nonsense demeanor approached them, his eyes sharp and assessing. He was impeccably dressed, a tape measure draped around his neck, and his expression was one of practiced professionalism.

"Angelo," Hannibal greeted warmly, extending a hand. "Thank you for accommodating us on such short notice."

"For you, Dr. Lecter, it is always a pleasure," Angelo replied, shaking Hannibal's hand firmly before turning his attention to Will. "You must be Will," he said, his tone brisk but not unkind. "Come, let us begin. We have much to do."

As they stepped further inside, Angelo motioned to a spot in front of a large, ornate mirror. "Stand here, don't move," he instructed, his voice carrying the authority of someone who had spent a lifetime perfecting his craft. Will nodded, stepping into place and feeling slightly overwhelmed by the grandeur of it all. The mirror reflected his uncertain expression, but he found solace in the reassuring presence of Hannibal beside him.

Hannibal's hand on his shoulder was a steady anchor, grounding him in the moment. "Just relax," Hannibal murmured, his voice low and comforting. "Angelo will take good care of you."

With a professional flourish, Angelo began to measure Will, his movements quick and precise. Hannibal stepped back slightly, his eyes roaming over the racks of fabrics and the various cuts displayed around the room. "I think something classic for the opera," Hannibal suggested, his tone thoughtful. "Perhaps a midnight blue with a subtle sheen, something that will complement Will's complexion and bring out the intensity of his eyes."

Angelo nodded, pulling a few swatches of fabric from a nearby shelf. "Excellent choice, Dr. Lecter. We have a fine selection of fabrics in that shade. Here, feel this," he said, offering a piece of luxurious, deep blue fabric to Hannibal, who ran his fingers over it appreciatively before passing it to Will.

Will took the fabric, the smooth texture sliding between his fingers, and couldn't help but feel a bit like a mannequin as the conversation about fabrics and cuts flowed around him. He watched their reflections in the mirror, the sight of Hannibal and Angelo discussing the finer points of tailoring with ease. The world of high fashion was clearly Hannibal's domain, and he navigated it with a confidence that was both impressive and slightly intimidating.

Occasionally, Hannibal would turn to Will, bringing him back into the conversation. "What do you think of this one, Will? It's important that you feel comfortable as well as look striking."

Will nodded, trying to keep up. “It’s nice. I like the color,” he said, his voice steadying as he met Hannibal’s gaze in the mirror. The subtle approval in Hannibal’s eyes made him feel valued, included in a world that still felt foreign.

“Very well,” Hannibal said, his eyes twinkling with a mixture of amusement and affection. “We’ll go with this fabric. Now, for the cut—Angelo, what do you recommend?”

Angelo launched into a detailed explanation of various cuts and fits, his hands moving animatedly as he described the benefits of each. Will half-listened, the technical jargon washing over him like background noise. He focused instead on the sound of Hannibal’s voice, the way he engaged with Angelo, effortlessly shifting between styles and preferences. It was a reminder of how different their worlds were, yet how seamlessly Hannibal moved between them.

As the fitting continued, Hannibal occasionally directed a comment or question to Will, ensuring he felt involved in the process. “How do you feel about a slightly tapered waist? It will accentuate your build nicely,” Hannibal asked, his tone considerate.

Will glanced at his reflection, then back at Hannibal. “Sure, whatever you think is best,” he replied, trusting Hannibal’s judgment. The confidence in Hannibal’s decisions made the entire experience more bearable, transforming what could have been an overwhelming ordeal into something almost enjoyable.

“Excellent,” Hannibal said, his smile warm and approving. “Angelo, let’s proceed with the tapered waist.”

Angelo nodded, making notes and adjustments as he worked. “You will look very handsome, Mr. Graham,” he said, his tone respectful. “Dr. Lecter has a keen eye for detail.”

Will felt a blush rise to his cheeks at the compliment, but the presence of Hannibal beside him, guiding the process with such ease, made it all feel manageable. During a quiet moment in the fitting, as Angelo was busy jotting down final measurements, Hannibal leaned in close to Will. The proximity brought a wave of Hannibal’s familiar cologne, a scent that was both soothing and intoxicating. Hannibal’s voice was a soft murmur, meant only for Will. “You’re doing wonderfully, Will. Trust the process.”

Will nodded, the anxiety that had been coiling in his stomach loosening slightly. Hannibal’s encouragement was a reminder that he wasn’t alone in this unfamiliar territory. The sensation of Hannibal’s breath against his ear, the warmth of his words, made him feel more at ease. He straightened his posture, feeling a bit more relaxed with each passing moment.

As Will stood in front of the mirror, he felt the weight of Hannibal’s gaze on him. There was something undeniably intense about the way Hannibal looked at him, a mixture of admiration and desire that sent a shiver down Will’s spine. Hannibal’s eyes were dark, tracing the lines of Will’s body. Will met his gaze in the mirror, his own eyes reflecting a blend of nervousness and arousal.

The room seemed to shrink around them, the rest of the world becoming inconsequential. Will’s pulse quickened, each beat resonating through his entire being. He could feel the heat

of Hannibal's stare, a silent communication passing between them. Hannibal's lips curved into a small, knowing smile, the kind that spoke volumes without uttering a single word. Will's breath hitched, his body responding to the unspoken promise in Hannibal's eyes.

Will's fingers twitched at his sides, an unconscious response to the building tension. He couldn't tear his eyes away from Hannibal's reflection, the way his gaze lingered on Will's chest, then his shoulders, and finally down to his waist. Hannibal's eyes flicked back up to meet Will's, and the connection was electric. It was as if the world outside the tailor shop ceased to exist, leaving only the two of them in this moment of shared desire.

Hannibal's tongue darted out to wet his lips, the simple gesture sending a jolt of arousal straight to Will's groin. He could feel his heart pounding, his skin prickling with goosebumps. Hannibal took a small step closer, his hand brushing against Will's arm in a seemingly casual gesture, but the touch was anything but casual. It was a deliberate caress, a subtle yet unmistakable sign of his desire.

Will's body reacted instinctively, leaning into the touch, his eyes never leaving Hannibal's. The room felt warmer, the fabric of the suit suddenly constricting as his body responded to the unspoken promise in Hannibal's eyes. Will's breath quickened, his chest rising and falling with each shallow inhale. He wanted to reach out, to close the distance between them, to feel Hannibal's body against his own.

Just as the tension was reaching a height that felt almost too intimate, too inappropriate for the public setting, a discreet cough broke the spell. Angelo cleared his throat, stepping back with a satisfied expression settling on his face as he gave Will a final once-over. "I am finished," he declared, the tape measure now hanging loosely around his neck. He turned to Hannibal, a respectful nod acknowledging his presence. "You will look very handsome for your *Dottore* Lecter."

The moment was broken, but the lingering heat remained. Will felt a flush of color rise to his cheeks, a mix of embarrassment and lingering arousal. He glanced at Hannibal, who met his gaze with the same unwavering confidence, his expression calm and collected. Hannibal's lips curved into a small, knowing smile, a silent acknowledgment of the tension that had just passed between them.

Will, on the other hand, felt the residual warmth of the moment still coursing through his veins. He shifted slightly, adjusting his stance as if to shake off the remnants of the charged atmosphere. His eyes flicked back to Hannibal, searching for any sign that he felt the same lingering effect. But Hannibal remained composed, his demeanor as unflappable as ever, though his eyes held a glimmer of something more—a promise of what was to come.

Sheepishly, Will offered a small smile, his cheeks still tinged with a faint blush. The juxtaposition of his own awkwardness against Hannibal's effortless confidence made him feel both endearingly vulnerable and strangely reassured. He knew Hannibal wouldn't judge him for his reaction; if anything, the subtle amusement in Hannibal's eyes suggested he found Will's flustered state charming.

Hannibal stepped closer, his hand brushing lightly against Will's back in a gesture of comfort and possession. The touch was brief but significant, a reminder of their connection that sent

another shiver down Will's spine. "You did wonderfully, Will," Hannibal murmured, his voice low and intimate, meant for Will's ears alone. The warmth in his tone was both soothing and arousing, a combination that made Will's heart race all over again.

As Angelo turned away to gather his tools, Will quickly began to redress, each familiar piece of clothing a small comfort against the opulent backdrop of the shop. The routine motion of buttoning his shirt and tightening his belt helped him regain a sense of normalcy. As he shrugged into his jacket, he couldn't help but feel grateful the fitting was over, the pressure of the experience finally easing.

With the fitting complete, Will reached for his wallet, intent on settling the bill. The act felt like a return to his usual self-sufficiency, a way to regain some control in an environment where he had felt out of his depth. Before he could extract any money, Angelo waved him off with a brisk, dismissive gesture. "It's already been taken care of," the tailor said, his tone leaving no room for argument. "Now, get out of my shop so I can begin my work." His words were accompanied by a stream of muttered Italian, the tone unmistakably impatient but not unkind.

Will scoffed, rolling his eyes at Hannibal, who stood beside him looking smug and pleased with himself. Of course, Hannibal had taken care of it. The thought was both exasperating and endearing. Will couldn't help but feel a mix of amusement and resignation. *On second thought, it's only fair,* he mused. *It's not my fault I didn't have anything appropriate to wear to an opera. What normal person does?*

A flash of amusement crossed Will's mind as he entertained a brief, rebellious thought: he should have asked the tailor to use the most expensive fabrics available, really run up the bill. Before Will and Hannibal could step out, the tailor added, "Come back at the same time in two days for a final fitting." His eyes met Will's with a hint of a smile, then he turned away.

Outside, the crisp air was a welcome contrast to the warm, heady atmosphere of the tailor's shop. Hannibal's hand settled on the small of Will's back, a comforting presence guiding him forward. "Shall we head back to my place for dinner?" Hannibal asked, his tone casual but filled with promise.

A smile spread across Will's face as he nodded. "Yeah, let's go. I've got my overnight bag packed," he replied, feeling a flutter of excitement for the evening ahead. As they walked to their respective cars, a shop across the street and down the block caught Will's eye with its discreet sign and inviting window display.

They reached their cars, exchanging a glance filled with shared understanding. Hannibal's eyes lingered on Will, a small, knowing smile playing on his lips. "I'll see you soon," Hannibal said, his voice smooth and reassuring.

Will watched as Hannibal's car pulled out and disappeared down the street. He waited until the tail lights were out of sight before turning back towards the storefront that had caught his eye earlier. The sign above the door promised just what he needed.

Will arrived at Hannibal's with a few minutes to spare before 8pm. The stop at the store had been surprisingly quick. A very helpful employee had assisted him through his blushing and stuttering as he tried to explain what he was looking for, making the experience almost painless. Now, with his purchases discreetly tucked away in his overnight bag, he felt a mixture of nervous apprehension and satisfaction.

As he approached the front door, the familiar structure of Hannibal's house loomed before him, its elegant lines and understated grandeur making Will's home in Wolf Trap look shabby in comparison. He took a deep breath and rang the doorbell. Almost immediately, the door swung open to reveal Hannibal, impeccably dressed as always, with a welcoming smile that sent a warm shiver down Will's spine.

"Good evening, Will," Hannibal greeted, his voice smooth and inviting. "Come in."

Stepping inside, Will was enveloped by the comforting, rich scents that always permeated Hannibal's home—leather, aged wood, and a hint of spices that made the air feel warm and inviting. He handed Hannibal his coat, their fingers brushing momentarily, sending a spark of electricity through him.

"How was your appointment with the tailor?" Hannibal asked, a glint of curiosity in his eyes.

Will chuckled, recalling the peculiar interaction. "It was… interesting. Your tailor mentioned he owed you several favors," he teased, raising an eyebrow. "What could you possibly have done to have him owing you instead of the other way around?"

Hannibal's smile widened, a soft chuckle escaping his lips. "Ah, Mr. Bianchi is a man of many talents and few words. Let's just say, I assisted him in a matter that required a particular set of skills I possess."

Will couldn't help but laugh, imagining the scenarios that might have involved Hannibal's unique expertise. "I'm almost afraid to ask for details."

Hannibal's eyes twinkled with amusement as he led Will further into the house. "Perhaps another time. For now, how about a drink? I have something special for us this evening."

They moved into the study, a room that exuded warmth and sophistication with its dark wood paneling, plush leather chairs, and shelves lined with books. The crackling fire in the hearth added a cozy ambiance, casting flickering shadows across the room. Hannibal walked over to a small, elegant bar cart and poured two glasses of whiskey from a bottle that looked like it cost more than Will's monthly rent.

Hannibal handed one of the glasses to Will, who accepted it with a curious glance at the amber liquid. "This looks fancy," Will remarked, lifting the glass to his nose and inhaling the rich, smoky aroma. "What is it?"

"A Dalmore 25-year-old single malt," Hannibal replied, his tone casual yet with an undercurrent of pride. "I heard it was particularly good and thought of you. I wanted us to enjoy it together."

Will raised an eyebrow, taking a tentative sip. The whiskey was rich and complex, with flavors of dark chocolate, spices, and a touch of orange zest. He let it roll over his tongue, savoring the warmth that spread through him. “A 25-year-old Dalmore, huh? You must have really wanted to impress me.”

Hannibal’s lips quirked into a small smile. “Only the best for you, Will.”

Will hid his reaction behind another sip of whiskey, but inside, he felt a rush of warmth that had nothing to do with the alcohol. “Well, you definitely know how to pick them,” Will said, keeping his tone light even as he felt a tightness in his chest. He settled into one of the leather chairs by the fire, feeling the heat seep into his bones. The room was a cocoon of comfort, the flames casting dancing shadows that flickered across Hannibal’s face.

Hannibal took the seat opposite, watching Will with a look that was both tender and assessing. “I’m glad you think so,” he said quietly, his gaze never leaving Will’s.

Will felt a flush of heat that had nothing to do with the fire or the whiskey. He glanced away, focusing on the way the flames licked at the logs in the hearth. “Yeah, it’s good,” he muttered, trying to downplay the emotion that threatened to surface.

But inside, he couldn’t help but feel a swell of affection for Hannibal. The thoughtfulness behind the gesture, the way Hannibal seemed to know exactly what would make him feel special, was overwhelming. He wasn’t used to being the center of someone’s attention like this, and it was both exhilarating and terrifying.

They sat in the study for a while, chatting about their days and sipping their whiskeys. The conversation flowed easily, with Hannibal recounting a particularly interesting case at his practice and Will sharing anecdotes from his day at the academy. The whiskey warmed Will from the inside out, loosening the tension that had knotted his shoulders.

After a while, Hannibal set his glass down and looked at Will with a thoughtful expression. “I was thinking of something light and low-effort for dinner tonight,” he said. “I’ve made a roasted winter vegetable salad—carrots, parsnips, and beets with a light vinaigrette served over mixed greens, topped with Bucheron and walnuts.”

Will chuckled softly, appreciating the irony. “Your idea of light and low-effort is a bit different from mine, but I’m not complaining,” he replied, the corner of his mouth quirking into a smile.

Hannibal’s eyes sparkled with amusement. “I suppose it is all a matter of perspective.”

They finished their whiskey and moved into the kitchen. The rich, savory smell of roasted vegetables mingled with the clean scent of the vinaigrette, making Will’s stomach rumble. Hannibal suggested they eat at the kitchen island, given the simplicity of the meal.

Hannibal poured them both a glass of wine—a crisp white that perfectly complemented the flavors of the salad. They sat side by side at the island, their shoulders occasionally brushing as they ate. The roasted vegetables were tender and flavorful, the goat cheese adding a creamy tang that balanced the dish beautifully.

As they ate, the conversation remained light. Will found himself laughing more than he had in days, the tension that usually gripped him easing in the presence of Hannibal's easy charm. He didn't have to filter his thoughts or worry about how he was coming across. He could just be himself—fidgeting hands, tapping feet, and all.

Hannibal never judged him for his quirks. If anything, he seemed to find them endearing. Will marveled at the ease with which he could exist around Hannibal, the sense of comfort and acceptance that permeated their interactions. It was a rare gift, one that Will still struggled to fully believe he deserved.

As they finished their meal and Hannibal began to clear the dishes, a pang of uncertainty hit Will. He couldn't shake the feeling that this happiness, this sense of belonging, was fragile. The life he and Hannibal were building was shadowed by the complexities of their pasts and the ever-present threat of discovery.

The clink of dishes being stacked and the soft murmur of Hannibal's voice as he hummed a tune should have been comforting, but instead, it underscored the honest reality of their situation. *What if this gets taken away from me?* The thought lingered, insidious and persistent. Will's mind spun scenarios of exposure and betrayal, each one more devastating than the last. The FBI, Jack Crawford, their convoluted history–each posed a threat to this happiness.

The thought of losing Hannibal was a physical ache, a sharp, twisting pain in his chest. He envisioned the sterile walls of an interrogation room, Hannibal's composed face stripped of its usual confidence, and his own reflection in the two-way mirror, broken and defeated. The very idea of being separated from Hannibal was unbearable. Will's breath hitched slightly, his fingers clenching around the stem of his wine glass as he tried to steady himself.

The way Hannibal understood him, accepted him, and even cherished the parts of Will that he himself found difficult to embrace—it was a connection deeper than anything he had ever known. The thought of having that ripped away left Will feeling raw and exposed, as if a vital part of him would be torn out, leaving him hollow.

He pushed the dark thoughts aside, determined to savor the moment for what it was—a brief respite from the chaos that so often surrounded them. He focused on the simple, grounding tasks at hand, helping Hannibal with the dishes and enjoying the domesticity of the moment. The scent of roasted vegetables lingered in the air, mingling with the earthy aroma of the wine, creating a cozy, intimate atmosphere.

Will glanced at Hannibal, who was meticulously wiping down the counter, his movements precise and graceful. There was a comfort in their routine, in the way they moved around each other with practiced ease. Despite the looming threats, this was real. This was theirs.

"I've missed this," Will said quietly, not entirely sure if he meant the evening or the feeling of being at ease with someone who truly understood him. "Missed you."

Hannibal looked up, his eyes turning tender as he met Will's gaze. "And I, you," he replied, his voice a gentle murmur that seemed to wrap around Will like a warm embrace.

Will smiled softly, feeling the warmth of Hannibal's words settle in his chest. "A nightcap?" he asked, his tone light but inviting.

Hannibal nodded, a slight smile playing at the corners of his mouth. "That sounds perfect," he agreed, rising gracefully from his seat.

As they entered the study, Hannibal moved towards the fireplace, his intent clear. Will, however, stepped forward, gently placing a hand on Hannibal's arm. "I got the fire, darlin'," he said, his voice soft and reassuring. He saw the brief flicker of surprise in Hannibal's eyes, followed by a rare moment of flustered hesitation.

Will realized, with a grin, that he'd only ever called Hannibal "darlin'" in the throes of passion, mid-sex, when his words were raw and unfiltered. The term of endearment slipping out so casually now had a different weight, one that clearly caught Hannibal off guard. The vulnerability in Hannibal's eyes, a flicker of surprise followed by a slight blush, made Will's heart swell with a mix of triumph and tenderness.

Hannibal's composure quickly returned, though a hint of color tinged his cheeks. "Very well," he said smoothly, though his voice carried a subtle warmth. He turned towards the liquor cabinet. "I'll get us more whiskey."

Will watched him for a moment, appreciating the fluid grace with which Hannibal moved. There was a certain satisfaction in seeing Hannibal momentarily off-balance, a reminder of the deeper connection they shared, one that went beyond the physical.

He turned his attention to the fireplace, crouching down to build the fire. He arranged the logs with care, feeling the rough texture of the wood under his fingers. The smell of pine filled his nostrils as he struck a match and lit the kindling, watching as the flames eagerly licked at the dry wood, growing stronger with each passing second.

The crackling of the fire brought a sense of calm, its warmth seeping into the room. Will glanced over his shoulder to see Hannibal pouring two glasses of whiskey, his movements precise and deliberate. The amber liquid glinted in the firelight, casting a golden hue across the polished wood of the cabinet.

Hannibal approached, handing Will a glass. "Here's to a quiet evening," he said, his voice carrying a note of genuine contentment.

Will accepted the glass, their fingers brushing briefly. He took a sip, savoring the rich, smoky flavor of the whiskey. "Thank you," he murmured, feeling the warmth spread through his chest, both from the drink and the fire. "This is nice."

Hannibal nodded, his gaze gentling as he looked at Will. "Indeed, it is," he replied, his tone intimate, filled with the depths of his emotions.

Will settled into one of the armchairs by the fire, feeling the heat of the flames on his skin, the crackling logs a soothing background noise. He watched as Hannibal took the seat opposite him, their eyes meeting across the flickering light. There was a comfort in their silence, a mutual understanding that needed no words.

As Will glanced at Hannibal, he took in the details of his appearance. Hannibal had removed his jacket and rolled up the sleeves of his crisp, white shirt, revealing the strong, lean muscles of his forearms. The deep burgundy tie was slightly loosened, an unusual but welcome sign of his relaxation. The soft glow of the flames highlighted the sharp angles of Hannibal's face, but it was the gentleness in his eyes that drew Will in.

Will felt a swell of affection, a deep-seated gratitude for these moments they could steal away from the rest of the world. He knew the dangers that loomed over them, the precariousness of their situation, but for now, he allowed himself to simply be, to exist in this space with Hannibal, where everything felt right.

Basking in the quiet domesticity they had created, Will felt a profound sense of belonging. These moments of shared tranquility, of simply being in each other's presence without the need for words or actions, were what he had longed for. He allowed himself to savor the simplicity of their companionship.

Will's gaze eventually fell on the chess set displayed on a low table near the window. It was an exquisite set, each piece intricately carved, the board itself made of polished wood with inlaid squares of onyx and ivory. He had noticed it before, but they had never played. It struck him as odd; Hannibal had to know how to play, right? It would be strange for him to own such a beautiful set and not know the game.

Will's lips quirked into a small smile as he considered it. The alcohol buzzed pleasantly in his system, making him feel uncharacteristically confident. Maybe he could beat Hannibal at his own game, literally and metaphorically.

"Hannibal," Will began, his voice a touch playful, "I've noticed that chess set before. Do you play?"

Hannibal's eyes followed Will's gaze to the chess set. A slight smile curved his lips. "I do," he replied, his tone almost conspiratorial. "It's been a while since I've had a worthy opponent, though."

Will chuckled, setting his glass down on the table beside him. "Well, I used to play a lot as a kid. Moved around so much with my dad that the chess clubs were the most welcoming places for the new kid. I got pretty good at it."

Hannibal's eyebrow arched, a glint of interest in his eyes. "Is that so? I would never have pegged you as a chess enthusiast."

Will felt a ripple of anticipation as Hannibal's smile grew at the prospect of their game. He reached for the chess set, the smooth wood cool under his fingers as he lifted the lid and began arranging the pieces. The firelight danced off the polished surfaces, casting intricate shadows that played across the board.

"I challenge you to a game," Will said, a hint of mischief in his tone.

Hannibal's eyes sparkled with delight, a rare and genuine expression that made Will's heart skip a beat. "Accepted," Hannibal replied, his voice a purr of satisfaction.

They settled opposite each other, the room quiet except for the crackle of the fire and the soft clink of glass as they set down their drinks. Will picked up the black pieces, letting Hannibal have white.

As they began to play, Will felt a sense of calm wash over him, the familiar patterns of the game soothing his restless mind. “You know, I moved around a lot as a kid with my dad. Always the new kid in school, never really fitting in,” he said, focusing on the board as he set up his pieces.

Hannibal raised an eyebrow, his fingers poised delicately over a pawn. “We’ve spoken about your childhood before. That must have been challenging,” he said, his tone probing but gentle.

Will nodded, making an answering move. The clink of the chess pieces was a comforting sound, grounding him in the moment. “Yeah, it was. But the chess clubs were always welcoming. Once they realized I had a knack for the game, it became easier. I got really good at it,” he said, his voice tinged with a mixture of nostalgia and pride.

Hannibal moved his knight, his eyes never leaving Will’s. “Chess is a game of strategy and adaptation. Much like navigating new environments and forming connections.”

Will smiled faintly, advancing his bishop. “Exactly. It taught me to think several moves ahead, and anticipate my opponent’s strategy.” The click of the piece against the board felt like a grounding ritual, a small comfort in the growing tension of their conversation.

Hannibal leaned back, his gaze thoughtful as he considered the board. “And yet, in life, the board is ever-changing, the opponents unpredictable,” he mused. He glanced up at Will, his eyes reflecting a depth of understanding and something more—a recognition of Will’s own unpredictable nature.

Will grinned, feeling a swell of pride at the hidden compliment. He knew Hannibal valued his unpredictability, the element of surprise that kept their dynamic charged and intriguing. The fire crackled in the hearth, casting flickering shadows across the room, adding to the intensity of the moment.

They continued to play, the clinking of chess pieces the only sound in the room apart from the fire. Will’s mind whirred, not just with strategies for the game but with the weight of their conversation. He could feel the shift in the air, the gravity of the topic pulling them deeper.

He waited impatiently for Hannibal to make his move, drumming his fingers lightly on the table. “In a game of chess, you can see all the pieces, know all the rules. But what if the pieces are moved by unseen hands? What if the rules keep changing?” he asked, his voice low and contemplative.

Hannibal nodded thoughtfully, his gaze steady as he made a decision and moved his queen. “It becomes a test of one’s adaptability and resilience. To anticipate not just the visible moves, but the intentions behind them.” His tone was measured, but there was a deeper implication in his words, a recognition of the shifting dynamics between them.

Will's eyes flicked up to meet Hannibal's, a spark of understanding passing between them. "Constantly adapting to new threats and challenges." He leaned back slightly, the tension in his body easing as he voiced the unspoken truth that had been simmering between them.

Hannibal's gaze intensified, a subtle smile playing at the corners of his mouth. "And seeing through the deception, understanding the true game being played." His words were a reminder of the constant need for vigilance, for seeing beyond the surface to the underlying motives and intentions.

Their roles were always shifting, a delicate dance of power and submission, trust and suspicion. Each move on the chessboard mirrored the strategic maneuvers in their relationship, a silent acknowledgment of the complexity that bound them together. The room was quiet, save for the crackle of the fire and the soft clink of glass.

Will felt a surge of frustration, the constant pressure of his double life bearing down on him. He rubbed his temples, sighing deeply. "It's exhausting, Hannibal. Being both the player and the piece, trying to navigate a game where the stakes keep rising," he admitted, his voice tinged with weariness.

Hannibal neatly captured one of Will's pawns, his fond smile a rare show of softness. "The burden of the chameleon. To blend in, yet never truly be at ease. To be seen and understood is a rare and precious freedom," he said, his voice gentle but firm.

Will felt a swell of emotion at Hannibal's words. He moved his rook assertively, his eyes locking onto Hannibal's. "There are moments I wish I could strip away all the masks, just… be myself. Without the constant pressure," he said, his voice filled with a raw honesty.

Hannibal reached across the board, his hand covering Will's drumming fingers, stilling them. "You have someone who sees beyond the masks and the chessboard, who understands the player behind the game," he said softly, his touch warm and grounding.

Will looked up, meeting Hannibal's gaze. The sincerity in Hannibal's eyes was a balm to his weary soul. "It's comforting to know that. Makes the game a little less daunting," he said, a small smile playing at his lips.

Hannibal's smile widened, a rare and genuine expression. "Remember, even within the complex dance of the chess game, there is a path to liberation. And you are not alone in navigating it," he said, his voice a soothing murmur.

Will took a deep breath, the heaviness of their previous conversation lingering for a moment longer. He looked up, catching Hannibal's eye, and allowed a small, playful smile to spread across his lips. The serious tone that had dominated their chess game began to dissolve, replaced by a lighter, more mischievous energy.

"You know," Will began, leaning back in his chair and stretching his legs out in front of him, "I stopped by a store on my way here." His voice carried a hint of teasing, his earlier frustration melting away.

Hannibal raised an eyebrow, a glimmer of curiosity sparking in his eyes. “I did notice an unusual aroma of silicone and latex when you arrived. Quite the curious choice for coming–or so I assumed–straight from the tailor’s,” he said, his tone smooth and playful.

Will chuckled, shaking his head in mild disbelief. “How do you do that?” he asked, genuinely fascinated by Hannibal’s seemingly supernatural abilities.

Hannibal began to explain, his voice taking on a familiar, analytical cadence, but Will laughed again, cutting him off with a wave of his hand. “Never mind,” he said, his laughter warm and infectious. “I don’t think I actually want to know.”

Will stood up, stretching lightly. The whiskey he had been sipping throughout the game made its presence known, causing his head to feel pleasantly fuzzy. He repressed a giggle, a rare and unexpected reaction that made him feel strangely carefree. “Wait here,” he said, his voice carrying a hint of mischief. “I’ve got something for you. Might make the night a little more interesting.”

Hannibal’s eyes followed him with a mix of curiosity and amusement. There was also a deep, unmistakable fondness in his gaze, a warmth that made Will’s heart flutter. The firelight danced in Hannibal’s eyes, adding a glow that seemed to reflect his inner intrigue.

Will walked out to the entryway, his footsteps echoing slightly in the quiet house. His excitement grew with each step, the whiskey-fueled confidence making his movements more fluid and relaxed. He reached his bag, rummaging through it to retrieve the item he had so eagerly purchased. His fingers brushed against the smooth silicone, and a small, satisfied smile tugged at the corners of his lips.

Returning to the study, Will kept one hand behind his back, concealing the item. He felt a thrill of excitement, a rush of adrenaline that heightened his senses. The warmth of the fire, the soft hum of the house, the faint scent of wood smoke—all of it seemed more vivid, more intense.

Hannibal quirked an eyebrow, a smile that was too knowing on his lips. He leaned back in his chair, his posture relaxed but his eyes sharp with intrigue. “What have you got there, Will?” he asked, his voice smooth and inviting.

Will stepped closer, a playful grin spreading across his face as he revealed the brand new prostate massager in his hand, a deep matte black with several ridges along the side. Hannibal’s eyes widened slightly, his curiosity piqued. When Will had stumbled through his request at the store, stuttering over the term “boyfriend,” the employee had kindly ignored his embarrassment, focusing instead on helping him choose the best product.

The employee had explained with enthusiasm, “This particular model is designed for maximum comfort and pleasure. It’s made of high-quality, body-safe silicone and features multiple vibration settings. The shape is perfect for hitting all the right spots, and it’s remote-controlled, so you can have a lot of fun with it.”

Will’s mind had buzzed with possibilities as he purchased it, the thought of using it with Hannibal sending a thrill through him.

“I thought this might be fun. What do you say, Doctor?” Will said now, his tone playful and teasing. The honorific rolled off his tongue with ease, a blend of mocking respect and affection. His eyes sparkled with gleeful anticipation as he watched Hannibal’s reaction.

Hannibal’s eyes darkened slightly with arousal, his smile widening. “I’m intrigued, Will,” he said, his voice low and velvety. “You do know how to surprise me. What were you planning?”

Will noticed the subtle shift in Hannibal’s expression, the way his eyes darkened and his smile turned more suggestive at the use of “Doctor.” He filed that reaction away for later, knowing that the title held a particular power over Hannibal, a button he could press to elicit that exact response.

Will’s heart raced, a mix of excitement and arousal thrumming through him. He stepped even closer, the warmth from the fire merging with the heat building between them. “I was thinking we could take this upstairs and see just how well it works,” he said, his voice dropping to a husky whisper.

During the drive over, Will’s mind had been consumed with fantasies about using the prostate massager on Hannibal. He imagined Hannibal spread out on the bed, a veritable feast before him. Will’s hands, steady and sure, guiding the sleek device into Hannibal, watching his body arch in response. The thought of Hannibal’s control slipping, of him begging for more, sent a thrill through Will. He could almost hear Hannibal’s deep moans, feel the tension in his muscles, see the way his eyes would darken with desire.

The fantasy had affected him profoundly, making his drive a series of stolen moments of arousal. He’d shifted in his seat, trying to alleviate the growing pressure in his pants, the steering wheel slick under his palms as he gripped it tightly. Each stoplight felt like an eternity, each turn a deliberate prolonging of the inevitable.

Hannibal’s eyes darkened with desire as he nodded in agreement and stood up. But rather than heading towards the stairs, he suddenly shoved Will into the wall, pressing his body against him. The forceful movement took Will by surprise, a thrill running through him as Hannibal’s lips crashed onto his in a hard, hungry kiss. Hannibal’s mouth was demanding, his tongue exploring with a fervor that made Will’s knees weak. Will’s hands instinctively gripped Hannibal’s shoulders, feeling the solid muscles beneath his fingertips.

Hannibal’s body felt incredible against him, a heady mix of strength and control. Will’s mind briefly entertained the idea of letting Hannibal manhandle him more often, the thought sending a delicious shiver down his spine. The pressure of Hannibal’s chest against his, the way their bodies fit together perfectly, made the kiss all the more intoxicating. Will’s hands slid down to grip Hannibal’s waist, pulling him even closer, feeling the heat radiating from him.

Finally breaking the kiss, Hannibal’s breath was hot against Will’s ear. “Upstairs,” he murmured, his voice a low growl of desire.

They stumbled towards the stairs, their hands exploring each other’s bodies with a sense of urgency. Will’s fingers traced the contours of Hannibal’s back, feeling the taut muscles

beneath the fabric of his shirt. His other hand brushed over Hannibal's ass, giving it a playful pinch. Hannibal's deep chuckle filled the air, a rich, warm sound that sent shivers down Will's spine. It was a sound so rare and genuine that it made Will's heart skip a beat. He looked at Hannibal in astonishment, the sight of his normally stoic lover lost in a moment of pure joy was mesmerizing.

As they reached the bottom of the staircase, Hannibal giggled again, the sound light and carefree. Will couldn't help but smile, the sound wrapping around him, filling the space between them with a sense of intimacy. Hannibal's hands roamed over Will's chest, slipping under his shirt, fingertips brushing against bare skin. Each touch was electric, sending sparks of pleasure through Will's body.

Their ascent was slow, each step punctuated by soft touches and shared laughter. Will's fingers found their way to the buttons of Hannibal's shirt, deftly undoing them one by one. He pushed the fabric aside, exposing Hannibal's chest, the firelight casting warm, flickering shadows over his skin. Will leaned in, pressing his lips to the hollow of Hannibal's throat, tasting the faint salt of his skin, feeling the steady thrum of his pulse.

Hannibal's hands slid down Will's back, gripping his hips and pulling him closer. The feel of their bodies pressed together, the heat and hardness of their arousal, drove them both to the edge. They reached the top of the stairs, breathless and eager, their movements becoming more frantic. Will's hand slipped into Hannibal's hair, pulling him into a deep, searing kiss. Their tongues danced together, the taste of each other intoxicating.

Their footsteps echoed softly down the hallway, the sound mingling with their ragged breaths and the rustle of clothing. Will's hand slid down to intertwine with Hannibal's, pulling him gently yet insistently toward the bedroom. Each step they took was filled with an electric energy, their fingers squeezing tighter as the distance to their destination closed. Hannibal's shirt hung open, the fabric swaying with each movement, exposing the smooth expanse of his chest, and his chuckle had transformed into soft moans. Will's eyes darted to the open door of the bedroom ahead, the dim light within casting a welcoming glow. Hannibal's free hand roamed over Will's back, the touch a blend of possessiveness and need.

Entering the bedroom, they were greeted by warm, inviting shadows flickering across the walls. Will took a moment to breathe in the intimacy of the space before turning to Hannibal. "I need to shower off the day before we get started. Join me?"

Hannibal nodded, a soft smile playing at his lips. They moved to the bathroom and finished undressing, their movements now unhurried and deliberate. Will peeled off his shirt, feeling the cool air brush against his skin. Hannibal followed suit, the soft rustle of fabric the only sound breaking the silence. Will's eyes traced the lines of Hannibal's body, the familiar terrain that never failed to stir something deep within him.

Once undressed, they stepped into the shower. Will reached for the soap, lathering it between his hands before gently running them over Hannibal's body. The feel of Hannibal's skin beneath his fingers was both soothing and exhilarating. He took his time, savoring each touch, each caress, letting the sensations wash over him like the water cascading around them.

Hannibal mirrored his actions, his hands gliding over Will's form with equal care and reverence. They moved in a synchronized dance, the rhythm of their movements building a sweet anticipation for the rest of the evening. As Hannibal's hands roamed over his body, Will felt a stir of arousal, their closeness awakening a need that simmered just beneath the surface. Yet, this moment was not about gratification but about the tenderness between them.

The water mingled with their quiet sighs, both half-hard but content in the gentle exploration of each other. There was no rush, no urgency—just the simple pleasure of being together, of sharing this intimate space. Will closed his eyes, leaning into Hannibal's touch, the warmth of the water and the feel of Hannibal's hands grounding him in the present moment.

When they finally stepped out of the shower, they toweled off slowly, the tenderness of the moment lingering between them. Will's eyes wandered to the bathtub, its inviting depth promising future moments of shared intimacy. He glanced at Hannibal, a playful glint in his eye. "One day, I want to use that with you," he said, nodding toward the tub.

Hannibal's smile widened, his eyes crinkling with the expression. "I look forward to it, Will," he replied, his voice a gentle caress.

Once they were both dry, Will took a moment to appreciate the sight of Hannibal wrapped in a towel, his damp hair falling in soft waves around his face. "Go wait for me on the bed," Will instructed, his voice low and commanding. Hannibal nodded, his eyes lingering on Will before he turned and moved toward the bedroom.

Will bit his lip as he watched Hannibal go, appreciating his form from behind. He wrapped his own towel around his waist and turned his attention to the fireplace. The room was already warm, but he wanted to ensure Hannibal's comfort, knowing how much he disliked the cold. As he knelt to build the fire, he could feel Hannibal's gaze on him, the weight of it sending a thrill through his body.

The crackle of the fire filled the room, its warmth and light casting a soft glow over the space. Stoking the flames, Will watched as they grew and danced, creating an ambiance that was both intimate and inviting. He felt a sense of satisfaction, knowing that Hannibal would appreciate the effort.

Turning around, he caught Hannibal's eye. "Like what you see, baby?" he asked, a playful smile tugging at his lips.

Hannibal's eyes were dark and hungry, his gaze fixed on Will with an intensity that made Will's heart race. "Very much," Hannibal replied, his voice thick with desire.

Straightening up, Will let the towel slip from his waist and fall to the floor. He stood there, naked and unabashed, enjoying the way Hannibal's eyes roved over his body, taking in every detail. The firelight highlighted the contours of his muscles, casting shadows that accentuated his form.

"Come here," Will said, his voice a command that brooked no argument.

Hannibal moved to the edge of the bed, his eyes never leaving Will's. The desire between them was palpable, a tangible force that drew them together. Will approached slowly, reveling in the way Hannibal's breath hitched, his pupils dilating with arousal.

Standing between Hannibal's legs, he tilted his chin up, forcing Hannibal to meet his gaze. "You're going to follow my every instruction tonight. Understood?"

Hannibal nodded, a shiver of excitement running through him. "Yes, Will."

Leaning in, Will captured Hannibal's lips in a deep, demanding kiss. His hands roamed over Hannibal's body, teasing and caressing, eliciting soft moans from him. The feel of Hannibal's skin under his fingertips, the taste of his mouth, fueled Will's desire, driving him to explore further.

He moved to Hannibal's neck, nipping and sucking at the sensitive skin, savoring the way Hannibal's breath caught, the way he leaned into the touch. Will could feel the tension in Hannibal's body, the way he held himself in check, waiting for Will's next move.

"Lie down," Will instructed, his voice a husky whisper.

Stretching out on the bed, Hannibal obeyed, his gaze fixed on Will's with a hunger that mirrored his own. Will climbed onto the bed, his body hovering over Hannibal's, close enough to feel the heat radiating between them. He began a slow, deliberate exploration, his hands gliding over Hannibal's skin, fingers tracing the defined lines of his muscles. Will's lips followed the path of his hands, pressing hot, open-mouthed kisses along Hannibal's neck, down his chest, and across his abdomen, savoring the taste of him.

Hannibal's breath hitched, a low moan escaping his lips as Will's tongue flicked over a sensitive spot. The shivers that coursed through Hannibal's body fed Will's desire, each reaction urging him to explore further. He nipped and sucked at Hannibal's skin, leaving a trail of red marks that stood out starkly against his pale flesh, each one a claim, a mark of possession.

Every gasp, every moan, every shiver of pleasure etched into Will's mind as he delved deeper, his touch firm and demanding. He could feel Hannibal's muscles tensing, the anticipation coiling tighter with every moment. The moment drew closer when he would introduce the prostate massager, and the thought alone made his pulse quicken.

"You're so responsive," Will murmured against Hannibal's skin, his voice thick with lust. He could feel Hannibal's cock hard and insistent against his thigh, the evidence of his arousal only heightening Will's own need. He shifted, grinding his hips against Hannibal's, drawing a guttural groan from him. The sounds of their pleasure mingled with the crackling fire, creating a symphony of desire that filled the room.

Will's fingers found their way lower, brushing over Hannibal's entrance, teasingly circling but never pushing inside. "You want more, don't you?" he whispered, his breath hot against Hannibal's ear. The twitch of Hannibal's hips, the desperate little whine that escaped his throat, was answer enough.

With deliberate slowness, Will reached for the prostate massager, his eyes never leaving Hannibal's face. He watched the desperate need build in Hannibal's eyes, his fingers twitching as though to reach out, to beg for the release he craved.

"Good boy," Will praised, the words a dark promise. "Let's see how good this can make you feel."

Will moved deliberately, retrieving the lube from the bedside table. The cool gel coated his fingers, a counterpoint to the heat radiating from Hannibal's skin as he applied it with a careful, yet assertive touch. His fingers traced the rim of Hannibal's entrance, spreading the slick lubricant with slow, deliberate strokes.

nt."Just relax, Hannibal," Will murmured, his voice a low, soothing whisper that belied the intense arousal coursing through him. His fingers pressed gently, breaching Hannibal with a deliberate slowness that made the older man's breath hitch. Will moved with a practiced ease, his fingers gliding in and out in a rhythmic dance designed to coax and tease. He could feel Hannibal's body reacting, muscles clenching and relaxing, a symphony of sensations that only fueled his desire to take his time.

"That's it, just like that," Will encouraged, his tone dripping with lust. Each touch, each press of his fingers was calculated to heighten Hannibal's arousal without allowing him the release he so desperately craved. Will's fingers moved with a tantalizing slowness, curling and spreading, opening Hannibal up with an almost excruciating patience.

The effort it took for Hannibal to remain still, to hold back the urge to push for more, was obvious. Will could see the tension in the way Hannibal's fingers gripped the sheets, knuckles white with the strain of restraint. Every soft gasp and quiet moan that escaped Hannibal's lips was a reward, encouraging Will to continue.

"You're doing so well, Hannibal," Will whispered, his breath hot against Hannibal's ear as he added another finger, stretching him further. He delighted in the way Hannibal's body responded, the way his hips involuntarily lifted, seeking more of the sweet torment Will was so expertly administering. "Just a little more," he murmured, his voice a velvet promise.

A particularly soft whine escaped Hannibal, a raw, needy sound that sent a shiver down Will's spine. The desperation in that single note was audible, an unfiltered plea that cut through the room's heated atmosphere. Hannibal's body arched involuntarily, the strain of holding back evident in every trembling muscle.

"Please, Will," Hannibal begged, his voice breaking with raw longing, every syllable dripping with need. His eyes were wide, dark with desire, as they locked onto Will's, silently pleading for the release he craved. "Please."

Will's smile was a mix of tenderness and predatory intent. "All you had to do was ask, sweetheart," he murmured, his voice a low, seductive purr. He slowly inserted the massager, watching Hannibal's rim stretch around it, the sight utterly captivating. Hannibal's breath hitched, muscles tensing around the intrusion, as a soft groan escaped his lips. The way Hannibal's body reacted, the subtle quiver of his thighs and the way his back arched, made Will's pulse quicken with desire.

He turned on the massager to its lowest setting, his eyes never leaving Hannibal's face. Watching the initial shock of pleasure wash over Hannibal, he asked, "Is that okay, baby?" His tone was a blend of genuine care and teasing dominance. Hannibal's response was a low, guttural noise, his body arching involuntarily, a raw and primal sound that spoke volumes of his intense pleasure. The sight of Hannibal lost in the sensation, utterly at Will's mercy, was intoxicating.

"Good," Will said softly, increasing the intensity slightly. He leaned in, his lips trailing soft kisses along Hannibal's jaw, his hands continuing to caress and explore every inch of skin. "I want to hear you, Hannibal. Tell me how it feels."

Hannibal's eyes fluttered shut as he exhaled a shuddering breath, his voice breaking through the haze of pleasure. "Will… it's… God, it's exquisite." His normally composed voice trembled with need. "The way you're… teasing me, every nerve… it's maddening." A deep, resonant moan escaped him as Will adjusted the massager. " *Please* , Will, I need more… your control… your touch."

Adjusting the settings and rhythms, Will reveled in the control he wielded. The power to bring Hannibal to the brink of ecstasy and hold him there was a heady sensation. He purposefully avoided the setting that elicited the most intense response from Hannibal, teasing him with the promise of release without granting it. Hannibal's frustration was noticeable, his body straining toward the pleasure that Will held just out of reach, every muscle taut with longing. The way Hannibal's breaths came in ragged gasps, his fingers clutching at the sheets, only spurred Will on.

"You've been so good for me, darlin'," Will whispered, his voice a delicious blend of command and affection. He leaned in close, his breath warm against Hannibal's ear, his words a tantalizing promise. "Do you think you can come for me?"

Hannibal's answer was immediate, a frantic nod accompanied by a desperate whimper. His eyes were wide, pupils blown with lust, and his gaze locked onto Will's with a fervent intensity. The need in his expression was palpable, his body trembling with anticipation.

"Okay, baby," Will murmured, his voice softening to a tender coax. He pressed a gentle kiss to Hannibal's lips, their breaths mingling in the heated space between them. "I want you to come for me. Don't look away from my eyes."

The intensity of Will's gaze held Hannibal captive, the air between them electric. Will's hand moved with purpose, adjusting the massager's rhythm to hit just the right spot, driving Hannibal closer to the edge. Hannibal's body arched, his breath hitching in his throat, and his eyes never wavered from Will's, even as the pleasure became overwhelming.

Hannibal's climax was a torrent of raw, unrestrained ecstasy. His body arched off the bed, muscles taut and straining as waves of pleasure crashed over him. A deep, guttural moan tore from his throat, his eyes wide and unseeing, yet still locked onto Will's with an intensity that conveyed pure, primal need. His hands clutched at the sheets, knuckles white, as his release spilled out in rhythmic pulses, each one wracking his body with shuddering intensity.

Will watched, mesmerized, as Hannibal came undone beneath him. The sight was intoxicating, a potent mix of power and intimacy that sent a thrill of satisfaction coursing through him. He could feel the slick heat of Hannibal's climax, the way his lover's body quivered and convulsed in the throes of pleasure. The sounds, the sights, the very essence of Hannibal's release were seared into Will's memory, a testament to the control he wielded and the deep trust between them. In that moment, Will felt a surge of possessive pride, knowing he had brought Hannibal to this state of complete abandon.

As Hannibal came down from his climax, his breathing gradually steadied, and the tension ebbed from his body. Will moved with deliberate care, slowly removing the massager and watching as Hannibal's rim contracted in its absence. Reaching for a soft cloth, Will gently cleaned Hannibal, each touch a soothing and tender caress.

His fingers moved tenderly over Hannibal's skin, tracing the lines of his lover's body with reverence. The warmth of Hannibal's flesh against the cool cloth was a reminder of the vulnerability they had both exposed. As he looked up, Will's eyes widened with concern at the sight of tears streaming down Hannibal's face. The glistening tracks on his cheeks were unexpected, cutting through the haze of their shared passion. He cupped Hannibal's face gently, his thumb brushing away the tears with infinite tenderness. "What's wrong?" he asked softly, his voice laced with worry and affection.

Hannibal, still recovering, managed to speak between breaths. "That was… profoundly intimate," he said, his voice thick with emotion. "I've never felt so… cherished."

Will felt a surge of affection and understanding, leaning in to kiss Hannibal softly, pouring all the tenderness he felt into the kiss. The intimacy of the moment was profound, a silent acknowledgment of the deep bond they shared. He could feel the lingering tremors of Hannibal's climax in the way he trembled slightly under his touch, and it filled him with a sense of protectiveness and love.

His heart swelled with a mixture of emotions—satisfaction, love, and a deep, abiding sense of belonging, yet beneath it all, a current of angst roiled within him. As he looked at Hannibal, bathed in the soft light of the fire, Will felt a surge of affection so intense it was almost painful. This was where he was meant to be, with Hannibal, in this shared space of vulnerability and strength.

He knew he loved Hannibal, felt it in every fiber of his being, but the words caught in his throat, unspoken and heavy. The urge to tell him was almost overwhelming, a pressure building in his chest, but he knew now wasn't the right time. The fear of breaking the fragile balance they had found held him back, a silent barrier between his heart and his voice.

As he leaned in to kiss Hannibal softly, the touch of their lips was filled with the words he couldn't yet say. The tenderness of the moment contrasted with the turmoil inside him, a reminder of the complexity of their relationship. He marveled at the intimacy they shared, the way Hannibal's presence could simultaneously soothe and unsettle him.

His thoughts were a tangled mess of longing and restraint. He wanted to pour out his heart, to let Hannibal know how deeply he felt, but the timing had to be perfect. The fear of rejection,

of shattering the delicate trust they had built, kept him silent. So, he channeled his emotions into the kiss, hoping that Hannibal could feel the depth of his love without needing the words.

The kiss ended, and Hannibal looked up at Will, a small, genuine smile playing on his lips. “I want to use the massager on you,” he said, his voice a low, intimate murmur that sent a shiver down Will’s spine. The suggestion was laden with promise, a tantalizing glimpse of what could be.

“Maybe next time, you can use it on me,” he promised with a smile. “But tonight, I have other plans for you.”

Will instructed Hannibal to kneel on the bed. As he climbed off, he noticed the way Hannibal’s eyes followed his every movement, the hunger in his gaze growing with each passing second. Will couldn’t help but show off a little, flexing his muscles subtly, knowing the effect it would have on Hannibal.

Will felt a surge of arousal at the intensity of Hannibal’s gaze, the way his eyes darkened with raw desire. His movements were a deliberate performance, and the effect it had on Hannibal was intoxicating. He could see the lust simmering just beneath the surface, the way Hannibal’s breath hitched slightly, his pupils dilating. His cock twitched with anticipation, knowing that Hannibal’s eyes were drinking in every inch of him, hungry and eager for what was to come.

“For tonight, I want you to use your mouth on me,” Will commanded, his voice a low rumble of desire.

Hannibal eagerly complied, moving with a fluid grace that belied his eagerness. He positioned himself in front of Will, eyes dark and intense as he opened his mouth. The moment Hannibal’s lips wrapped around the head of his cock, Will felt a surge of heat race through him. Hannibal’s tongue swirled around the tip, teasing and tasting, before he took Will deeper, the wet heat enveloping him entirely. The sensation was electric, a mix of pleasure and power that sent a shiver of pure ecstasy down Will’s spine.

Will kept a firm grip on Hannibal’s hair, controlling the pace and depth with deliberate precision. He guided Hannibal to take him slowly at first, savoring the feel of Hannibal’s mouth sliding up and down his length. “Just like that,” he murmured, his voice rough with need. “You look so fucking good with my cock in your mouth, Hannibal.” The sight of Hannibal’s lips stretched around him, cheeks hollowing with each suck, was almost too much. The way Hannibal’s eyes remained locked on his, full of submission and hunger, only intensified the experience.

His hips began to move, thrusting gently into Hannibal’s mouth, feeling the tightness of his throat constrict around him. Each movement was accompanied by soft, wet sounds and Hannibal’s muffled moans, vibrations that sent waves of pleasure coursing through Will’s body. He could feel the heat building, the pressure mounting, as Hannibal’s mouth worked him skillfully, drawing him closer to the edge with every stroke.

Seeing Hannibal like this, so willing and eager, his submission complete, was almost too much. The sight of his lips stretched around his cock, the subtle flex of his throat as he took

Will deeper, was a visual and tactile feast. The sensation of Hannibal's mouth, warm and wet, combined with the control he had over every movement, every breath, sent Will spiraling towards his climax. He tightened his grip on Hannibal's hair, thrusting deeper into his mouth, the slick heat enveloping him completely.

Hannibal's eyes were dark with desire, his gaze locked onto Will's with an intensity that sent shivers down Will's spine. His cheeks hollowed with each suction, his tongue swirling and pressing in ways that drove Will wild. Hannibal's fingers dug into Will's thighs, anchoring himself as he moved with a mix of eagerness and skill, his own arousal evident in the way his body quivered.

Each thrust was deliberate, the rhythm a blend of rough urgency and careful precision. Hannibal's eyes stayed locked on his, a silent communication of need and pleasure that only heightened Will's arousal. He could feel the muscles in his own thighs tightening, the coil of pleasure winding tighter with each movement. The wet, obscene sounds of Hannibal's mouth working him, mixed with the occasional desperate moan, created a symphony of raw, erotic intensity.

Hannibal's lips glistened with saliva and pre-come, his face a portrait of focused ecstasy. His fingers occasionally flexed, gripping Will's thighs tighter, as if grounding himself in the act. The way Hannibal's throat contracted around him, taking him deep with each thrust, was driving him wild. Will could see the flush spreading across Hannibal's cheeks, the slight sheen of sweat on his brow, all signs of his own arousal and effort.

Will's moans grew louder, each sound a raw expression of the overwhelming pleasure coursing through him. The feeling of Hannibal's tongue flicking against him, the way his throat contracted around his cock, was driving him wild. He could feel the pressure building, an intense, almost unbearable peak that he chased with every thrust.

With a final, deep thrust, he climaxed, holding Hannibal in place as he rode out the waves of ecstasy. Hannibal's eyes fluttered closed, a soft, almost contented moan vibrating around Will's cock as he swallowed. His tongue continued to work gently, milking every drop of Will's release with expert precision. The sensation of Hannibal swallowing around him sent aftershocks of pleasure through his already trembling body. Will's head fell back, a guttural groan escaping his lips as he savored the intensity of his release, every sense alight.

Hannibal swallowed every drop, his eyes never leaving Will's. As Will's breathing steadied and the aftershocks of his climax faded, he looked down at Hannibal with a mixture of satisfaction and possessive affection. Hannibal's gaze was steady, filled with a quiet reverence and a dark hunger that made Will's heart pound.

Will's fingers tangled in Hannibal's hair, pulling him up for a deep, claiming kiss. The taste of himself on Hannibal's tongue was intensely erotic, a reminder of their intertwined desires. The kiss was fierce and demanding, tongues tangling in a heated dance, the raw, primal need evident in every movement. Hannibal's hands roamed over Will's body, caressing and gripping, drawing him even closer.

The sensation of Hannibal's still-slick lips against his own sent another jolt of arousal through Will, a promise of more to come. His hands roamed over Hannibal's back, feeling the

ripple of muscle under his fingertips, the heat of his skin. He broke the kiss, only to trail his lips down Hannibal's neck, nipping and sucking at the sensitive flesh, leaving marks that claimed Hannibal as his.

Will's touch was both possessive and tender, his fingers tracing the contours of Hannibal's body with a deep reverence. The feel of Hannibal's skin, the taste of him, the sound of his breath hitching in pleasure—all of it fueled Will's desire, a fire that burned hotter with each passing moment.

He knew tonight was far from over. Thinking of what lay ahead made his blood sing, his mind racing with possibilities. Will's hands slid down Hannibal's sides, gripping his hips and pulling him close, their bodies pressed together, the heat between them almost unbearable.

"Tonight, you're mine," Will whispered against Hannibal's ear, his voice low and seductive. The promise of more, the certainty of their shared passion, hung heavy in the air, a tantalizing prelude to the pleasures yet to come.

Chapter End Notes

as always, PLEASE drop a comment or come yell about this fic with me on tumblr @graciereadshannigram !

love u all <3

The Opera, Part 1

Chapter Notes

enjoy babes <3

beta'd by EnmitiesSaddestGlare and Jay_Is_A_Rat, they both deserve the world!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will left Quantico on Wednesday afternoon, feeling a mixture of anticipation and reluctance as he got into his car. The sky was a pale, wintry blue, with the sun beginning its descent, casting long shadows across the parking lot. He wasn't thrilled about having to go through another round of fitting, but the excitement of seeing what the tailor had come up with outweighed his irritation.

As he pulled out of the parking lot and onto the highway, the cityscape transitioned from the bustling chaos of Quantico to the serene, almost nostalgic atmosphere of Baltimore. The sun dipped lower, painting the sky with hues of muted pink and gray, and Will cranked up the heater, letting the warmth seep into his bones, chasing away the chill that lingered in the air.

Monday night had been a whirlwind of passion and intensity. He and Hannibal had kept at it like much younger men, their bodies entwined until the early hours of the morning. The memory of Hannibal's touch, the heat of their shared moments, still sent shivers down Will's spine. He had left Hannibal's house the next morning with a to-go mug of coffee in hand, feeling an unusual lightness in his step despite the lack of sleep. Hannibal had left for work shortly after, their parting filled with unspoken promises and lingering glances.

They had decided that Will would come over for an early dinner on Friday and stay to get ready ahead of the opera. It would work out well; Will didn't have any work on Friday, and Hannibal was only scheduled for a half day. The thought of spending another night with Hannibal, of the thrill of the opera, brought a smile to Will's face as he navigated the winding roads.

Both Tuesday and today had been quiet, almost serene. Will had only a couple of lectures to give, which had left him with plenty of time to reflect and prepare mentally for the weekend. The calm before the storm, he mused, the thought filling him with both excitement and nerves. The drive to Angelo's was a blur of city lights and fading twilight, his mind occupied with thoughts of the evening to come.

Will arrived at last, pushing open the door and stepping into the warm, inviting space. The now familiar scent of cedar and fine fabrics enveloped him immediately, bringing to mind images of Hannibal and the tailor flitting around him for the initial fitting. The soft overhead lights reflected off the polished wooden floors, casting a cozy, intimate ambiance throughout

the room. Will was surprised to find himself relaxed, far more so than he was the last time he was here.

Angelo heard him enter and bustled over with a welcoming smile, his eyes twinkling with enthusiasm. “Ah, right on time,” he exclaimed, clapping his hands together. “We must get you into that suit, yes?”

Will nodded, and followed Angelo deeper into the shop, the tailor’s confident stride and upbeat demeanor providing further reassurance. Angelo handed Will the almost-finished tuxedo, the fabric smooth and luxurious against his fingertips. “Now, let’s get you into this work of art. The fabric, you will see, it should be a second skin. You won’t even feel it, but everyone will notice,” Angelo instructed, gesturing towards a door at the back of the shop. “While you change, I explain what we will do for the final fitting, okay?”

Will stepped into the fitting room, closing the door behind him. The space was small but comfortable, with a large mirror dominating one wall and soft lighting that created a flattering glow. As he began to change, he could hear Angelo’s voice, muffled but clear enough to understand.

“We check the fit of the jacket, the length of the pants, make sure everything is perfect for you,” Angelo explained, his tone professional yet friendly. “This is where we fine-tune all the details to ensure the tuxedo looks and fits like a glove.”

Will slid the trousers on first, surprised at how well they fit. The fabric hugged his thighs and ass snugly, yet allowed for ease of movement. He fastened the waistband, noting how it accentuated his lean frame. Next, he slipped into the crisp, white dress shirt, buttoning it up and tucking it into the trousers. Finally, he donned the jacket, feeling the smooth glide of the fabric over his shoulders and down his arms.

Will took a deep breath and turned to face the mirror. The reflection staring back at him was both foreign and intriguing. He still looked like himself, but there was an added layer of refinement, an elegance that he hadn’t anticipated. As he adjusted the jacket, he couldn’t help but notice how it made his shoulders appear broader, his posture more confident. The fit was perfect, tailored to highlight his best features while offering a surprising level of comfort.

The tuxedo transformed him, elevating his appearance in a way that felt both powerful and reassuring. His worries about standing out at the opera began to melt away as he took in the sight. He could finally understand why Hannibal went to such lengths to look impeccable; there was a certain power in it, a sense of command and presence that was undeniable.

Will ran his hands down the front of the jacket, smoothing out nonexistent wrinkles and appreciating the craftsmanship. The fabric was rich and textured, the cut precise and flattering. He turned slightly, admiring how the trousers fit, the way they tapered perfectly to his ankles, showcasing the sleek lines of his legs.

Angelo knocked gently on the door, his voice carrying a note of excitement. “How does it feel, Will?”

Will opened the door and stepped out, meeting Angelo's expectant gaze. "It feels… incredible," he admitted, a genuine smile tugging at his lips. "I didn't expect it to be this comfortable."

Angelo's eyes sparkled with pride. "That's the magic, Mr. Graham. Quality and precision. We want you to not only look immaculate but feel invincible," he said with a wink. "Now, let us start with the jacket. How does that feel on your shoulders?"

The tailor began his meticulous inspection, his hands deftly adjusting the jacket and ensuring the shoulders sat perfectly. Will stood still, his teeth lightly gritted, feeling like a mannequin under the tailor's critical eye. The sharp tug of the fabric, the occasional prick of a pin, and the precise movements of Angelo's skilled hands kept Will's senses on high alert.

"Stand still, just a moment," Angelo spoke as he positioned Will. "Let me just check the length of the pants." Angelo knelt gracefully, one knee touching the polished wooden floor, and gently tugged at the hem of Will's trousers. With deft fingers, he adjusted the fabric, ensuring it fell perfectly over the tops of Will's shoes.

Angelo kept up a steady stream of Italian under his breath, the lyrical flow of the language providing a strange comfort to Will. He couldn't understand most of it, but the cadence and passion behind the words brought a small smile to his lips. The tailor's mutterings were punctuated with the occasional " *bene* " and " *perfetto* ," filling Will with relief.

"There," Angelo said, stepping back to admire his handiwork before diving in for another tweak. Will could feel the tailor's intense scrutiny, each adjustment a testament to Angelo's commitment to perfection. "How does that fit now?"

Will moved slightly, testing the feel of the suit. "It feels snug, but comfortable."

Angelo smiled, a glint of satisfaction in his eyes. "That is what we aim for. A suit that complements every angle, every movement. A well-tailored suit is like a dance partner that follows your lead flawlessly."

The words echoed in Will's mind, a suit like a dance partner. He could see it now, the way Hannibal would lead, hand firm on Will's back and he would follow, their steps perfectly in sync, an unspoken understanding passing between them. Will could almost feel the heat of Hannibal's body close to his, the gentle pressure of his hand, the way their movements would synchronize effortlessly. The fantasy made him blush deeper, the warmth spreading from his cheeks to his chest. For a moment, he allowed himself to get lost in the daydream, savoring the imagined closeness.

But as the tailor made a few minor adjustments, reality set back in, and Will shifted slightly, his patience wearing thin. He focused on the end goal: Hannibal seeing him in this tuxedo. The thought of Hannibal's reaction made the discomfort and waiting worthwhile.

Will imagined stepping out in front of Hannibal, the look of admiration and desire in his lover's eyes. He pictured Hannibal falling to his knees, unable to resist the allure of Will in the perfectly tailored suit. The memory of their passionate encounters, the way Hannibal had looked at him with unrestrained hunger, fueled his imagination.

“Move a bit, bend your arms, and sit,” Angelo instructed, pulling Will, once again, from his reverie. Will complied, moving and bending as directed, the fabric of the tuxedo moving seamlessly with him. He sat, feeling the material stretch comfortably over his thighs and around his waist.

Angelo observed Will’s movements with a discerning eye, nodding in approval. “Perfetto,” he said, a satisfied smile spreading across his face. “You look magnificent, Will. Your *dottore* will be very pleased.”

Will felt a flush of warmth at the comment.The possessive beast in his chest settled, feeling almost as if it were preening. The acknowledgment of his relationship with Hannibal, small as it was, made Will’s heart swell with a fierce pride. He stood, catching his reflection in the mirror once more. The tuxedo hugged his frame perfectly, accentuating his broad shoulders and lean physique. He felt a surge of confidence, the last of his worries about standing out at the opera melting away. In this tuxedo, he felt powerful, refined, and ready to take on Baltimore’s high society–or at least, ready to dazzle Hannibal.

“Thank you, Angelo. I appreciate all the work you’ve put into this,” Will said, his voice sincere.

Angelo smiled warmly, a sense of accomplishment in his eyes. “It is my pleasure. Now go, enjoy your evening. Remember, the suit may make the man, but it is the confidence that truly stands out. And you, Mr. Graham, have plenty of that. Take care and give my regards to Dr. Lecter.”

Will nodded, feeling the excitement bubbling within him. “When should I come back to pick it up?”

“Come back on Friday morning,” Angelo instructed. “The final touches will be completed by then, and it will be ready for you.”

Will left the shop, anticipation replacing the annoyance he had felt earlier. The power and elegance he felt now were just a taste of what was to come, and he couldn’t wait to reveal himself to Hannibal.

The rest of the week passed easily, and Friday afternoon came quickly. Will pulled up to Hannibal’s house, the rattle of the car engine silencing as he turned off the ignition. Looking up at Hannibal’s home, imagining how the evening would play out–his nerves, while temporarily settled, came back with a roaring vengeance. As Will sat there for a moment, he tamped down on his insecurities. He took a deep breath, reminding himself how well prepared he was. *I’ll fit in with Hannibal’s high society acquaintances* , he told himself.

Earlier that morning, with no classes to teach and no calls from Jack, Will had taken time to make final preparations for the evening. His first stop had been a barbershop, and it had done wonders for both his hair and his confidence. His hair had been neatly trimmed and styled–the barber told him exactly how to recreate the look–and his beard was closely cropped, giving him a polished appearance that he knew would please Hannibal.

After the barbershop, Will had made his way to Angelo's to collect his tuxedo. The final touches had been completed, and Angelo's discerning eye had ensured it was a perfect fit. Will had slid the fabric on and promptly blushed when Angelo breathed, "Magnificent. You look like you were born to wear this."

Wrapped in Angelo's confidence, Will stepped out of the car, the cold winter air biting at his skin, carrying a garment bag in one hand and an overnight bag in the other. His neighbor had kindly agreed to take care of his dogs once again, allowing him the luxury of not having to rush home in the morning. It was a relief to know they were in good hands, and it allowed him to fully immerse himself in the evening ahead. As he walked up the cobblestone path to Hannibal's door, he felt a wicked grin tug at his lips. Inside the overnight bag was a box, another one of his purchases from the other night.

He hadn't even reached the door when it swung open, revealing Hannibal standing there, looking composed and elegant as ever. The warm light from the foyer spilled out, casting a golden glow around Hannibal, making him look almost ethereal.

"Will," Hannibal greeted, his voice smooth and warm, like honey dripping from a spoon. "You look wonderful." Hannibal's eyes traveled over Will with unmistakable intent, a slow smile spreading across his face.

Will felt a blush creep up his neck under Hannibal's gaze, hot and intense, as if the light had followed Hannibal's eyes. "Thanks," he replied, his voice a bit rougher than intended, betraying Hannibal's effect on him. "I went to a barbershop. Wanted to clean up a bit."

Hannibal's smile deepend, his eyes sparkling with approval, and he stepped aside to let Will in. "It suits you," he said, his tone carrying a hint of possessiveness that thrilled Will. As he stepped inside, Hannibal's eyes lit up at the sight of the garment bag.

"And what do we have here?" Hannibal asked, his hand reaching for the bag with a mischievous glint in his eye, as if he were a child sneaking a peek at his Christmas presents early.

Will batted Hannibal's hand away with a playful grin. "You'll have to wait until it's on me to see it."

Hannibal pouted, his lower lip jutting out minutely in a rare display of petulance. The sight made Will's heart swell; he loved seeing Hannibal like this, the usually impervious façade giving way to a more intimate, boyish charm. It was a private delight, a side that Hannibal reserved only for him.

Stepping closer, Will gripped Hannibal's chin firmly but gently, his fingers warm against the cool skin. "You can be patient for another hour or two," he said, his voice light but laced with a note of command.

Hannibal's eyes flashed with a blend of defiance and submission, a combination that always sent a thrill through Will. The challenge in Hannibal's gaze was obvious, a silent dare wrapped in a veneer of obedience. "You're enjoying this, aren't you?" Hannibal accused, his voice carrying a hint of teasing.

Will grinned, the expression slow and deliberate as he leaned in close, their breaths mingling. “Immensely,” he whispered, brushing his lips against Hannibal’s in a feather-light touch before he pulled back, leaving Hannibal’s lips parted and eyes dark with longing. The tension between them crackled, an undercurrent of unspoken promises and defiance hanging in the air. Will could feel the magnetic pull that simmered just beneath the surface, waiting to be unleashed.

Hannibal’s eyes lingered on Will for a moment longer before he eventually deferred, leading Will into the kitchen. The warm, inviting space was filled with the tantalizing aromas of a meal in progress. He glanced towards Will, almost apologetically. “I’m afraid it will be another light and simple meal ahead of the opera.”

Will scoffed lightly, a smile tugging at his lips. “What’s on the menu?” he asked, his curiosity piqued.

Hannibal’s eyes twinkled with amusement as he replied, “Seafood risotto with a side of fresh greens.”

As Hannibal spoke, Will could almost imagine the rich, savory flavor of the risotto, the tender seafood mingling with creamy rice and the crisp bite of the fresh greens. His stomach growled at the thought, and he watched as Hannibal moved with practiced grace, putting the final touches on dinner. The risotto was already prepared, so Hannibal turned his attention to the fresh greens, dressing them in a homemade vinaigrette with deft, efficient movements.

Will leaned against the counter, close enough to feel Hannibal’s warmth but not crowding him. His eyes followed Hannibal’s every move, admiring the precision and care he put into each task. As Hannibal worked, their hands brushed occasionally, sending little jolts of electricity through Will. Hannibal seemed to find excuses to touch him, a light brush of fingers here, a gentle nudge there, each contact warming Will.

Will’s gaze lingered on Hannibal’s hands as they moved with practiced ease, his fingers deftly handling the ingredients. He admired the way Hannibal’s sleeves were rolled up to his elbows, revealing strong, capable forearms. The muscles flexed subtly with each motion, a clear sign of the strength and skill that Hannibal possessed.

A smirk tugged at Will’s lips as he thought, *a strict regimen of swimming and murder can do wonders for one’s physique.* There was no denying that Hannibal’s dedication to his… extracurricular activities had left him in impressive shape.

As Hannibal plated the food, he glanced up at Will, their eyes locking for a moment. Hannibal’s lips curved into a small, private smile, one that Will couldn’t help but return. Their touches became more intentional, lingering a bit longer than necessary. Each brush of Hannibal’s hand had Will’s skin tingling with eager expectation.

Once the food was plated, Hannibal stepped back, admiring his handiwork for a moment before turning to Will. “Dinner is served,” he announced, a touch of pride in his voice.

Will pushed off the counter and stepped closer, his eyes flicking over the beautifully arranged plates. He could feel the heat radiating from Hannibal’s body, the closeness adding to the

charged atmosphere. “It looks amazing,” he said, his voice low and appreciative.

Hannibal’s smile deepened, his eyes darkening with a mixture of desire and satisfaction. “I’m glad you think so,” he murmured, his voice a soft caress.

They settled at the dining table, the soft clink of silverware and the gentle murmur of their conversation creating an intimate backdrop. Despite his nerves about the evening ahead, Will found himself genuinely enjoying the moment. But he always had, hadn’t he? These moments with Hannibal had always been a source of comfort and connection. The easy flow of their conversations, the understanding Will felt in Hannibal’s presence, both seemed to anchor him and made these dinners a cherished ritual.

As they ate, the delicious flavors of the seafood risotto and fresh greens danced on Will’s palate. Hannibal had outdone himself, as usual. Even if he was dismissive of his efforts, Will couldn’t help but appreciate the effort Hannibal had put into making even a “light and simple” meal exceptional.

But even the perfect meal wasn’t enough to hold all of Will’s attention. His thoughts kept drifting to the surprise he had for Hannibal, a secret tucked away in his overnight bag. He could barely contain his excitement at the thought of revealing it. Will was brought back to the present when Hannibal mentioned that he had seen this particular opera before, and Will realized he wasn’t actually certain what they would be seeing this evening.

“What opera are we seeing tonight?” Will asked, keen to know more. He chided himself for not thinking to ask earlier, having been so caught up in the social aspects of the evening.

Hannibal’s eyes lit up, a spark of enthusiasm in their depths. “La Traviata,” he replied. “It’s a beautiful and tragic tale, filled with passion and emotion. I think you’ll find it quite captivating.”

Will nodded, absorbing the information. He knew Hannibal didn’t mind that he hadn’t asked earlier, but he was glad to have done so now, if only to see Hannibal light up like this. Will didn’t know much about opera, but he trusted Hannibal’s judgment. If Hannibal thought it was worth seeing, then it must be something special. He couldn’t help but feel a bit more excited about the evening ahead, his earlier anxieties fading into the background.

As they finished their meal, Hannibal stood, his eyes gleaming with excitement. “We should start getting ready for the opera,” he suggested, his tone laced with excitement that mirrored the evening’s promise.

Will wiped his mouth with his napkin and met Hannibal’s gaze, feeling a surge of eagerness and something else he couldn’t quite name. “I agree, but I’d like to shower separately. I want you to see me only when I’m completely ready.” He resisted winking at Hannibal, but only just.

Hannibal’s eyebrow arched slightly, curiosity mingling with a hint of amusement in his gaze. “Very well,” he said, a small smile playing on his lips. “I am eagerly awaiting the reveal. Follow me.”

Hannibal led Will through the house, their footsteps echoing softly against the polished floors. The air between them was charged, every glance and touch heavy with unspoken words. Reaching the bathroom, Hannibal paused, turning to Will with a lingering look that made Will's pulse quicken.

"I shall await with bated breath," Hannibal murmured before stepping back to let Will enter.

Will stepped inside, the soft lighting casting a warm glow over the room. The bathroom was impressive, stocked with high-end toiletries that exuded the sophisticated scents Hannibal favored. He placed his overnight bag on the toilet, taking a moment to appreciate the thoughtfulness Hannibal had put into preparing the space.

Despite bringing his own, Will decided to use the products Hannibal had provided, wanting to immerse himself in the familiar, comforting fragrances that reminded him of his lover. The scent of cedar and sandalwood filled the air as he turned on the shower, the steam rising to create a warm, inviting cocoon.

He stepped under the hot spray, letting the water cascade over his body, washing away the remnants of the day. The heat soothed his muscles, easing the tension that had built up. As he lathered his hair with the rich shampoo, he inhaled deeply, the scent calming his nerves and grounding him in the moment.

Stepping out of the shower, Will dried off and stood in front of the mirror, examining his visage. With purposeful care, Will went through his grooming routine, ensuring every detail was perfect. He styled his hair the way the barber had shown him, the curls tamed into soft waves that framed his face. The beard oil added a light sheen to his close-cropped beard, the scent mingling with the other products to create a heady mix that made him feel both sophisticated and connected to Hannibal.

Done with his grooming, Will unzipped the garment bag, revealing the tuxedo from Angelo. The deep, subtly shimmery navy blue fabric caught the light, revealing its rich, almost satiny texture under the soft bathroom illumination. The color was like a midnight sky, flecked with the faintest hints of starlight. He took a moment to run his fingers over the fabric, appreciating the quality and craftsmanship.

The lapels were narrow and precise, adding a modern touch to the classic design. The crisp white shirt inside contrasted beautifully with the dark navy, its fabric pristine and smooth to the touch. Completing the ensemble was a sleek bowtie, made of the same luxurious material as the tux, its shine adding a final touch of sophistication.

As he dressed, each piece accentuated his frame in all the right ways. The jacket hugged his shoulders and chest, giving him a broader, more commanding presence. The tailored waist tapered perfectly, emphasizing his lean build. The pants fit well around his hips and thighs, allowing for ease of movement while highlighting his athletic form. He took a final look in the mirror, adjusting the bowtie with a practiced hand. The reflection staring back at him was striking: the deep navy tuxedo brought out the blue in his eyes, giving them an intense, almost mesmerizing quality. Will looked every bit the part of a refined gentleman, ready to stand beside Hannibal in any high-society setting.

He felt a rush of excitement, the pride in his appearance–a new feeling–mingling with the anticipation of Hannibal's reaction. Will couldn't wait to see the look in Hannibal's eyes, to feel the heat of his gaze as he took in the transformation. He imagined Hannibal's surprise, the dark hunger that would flare in his eyes, the barely restrained desire that would pulse between them.

With a final, satisfied smile, Will reached into his bag and pulled out the elegant black box. He tucked it into his pocket, feeling a thrill as he made his way to Hannibal's room. As Will walked down the hallway, his fingers smoothed down the front of his tuxedo, relishing the feel of the luxurious fabric against his skin.

Upon reaching the doorframe, Will knocked lightly, but didn't wait for a response before entering, knowing that Hannibal would still be in the bathroom–his grooming routine was impressively long. The room was bathed in the soft evening light filtering through the curtains, casting gentle shadows across the elegant furnishings. Hannibal's room always had a distinct, comforting ambiance, a blend of rich mahogany, leather, and the lingering scent of his cologne.

Sure enough, the room itself was empty, but the sound of Hannibal moving around echoed softly from the bathroom – the gentle hum of an electric razor, the clink of a brush against porcelain. Will's heart skipped a beat at the familiar sounds, the intimacy of the moment making his breath hitch.

Will took a moment to position himself casually yet deliberately, ensuring he showed off his best angles. He had practiced in the mirror earlier, just to make sure. His hand resting on his hip, he leaned slightly against the doorframe, his other hand tucked into his pocket, exuding a relaxed confidence.

"Hannibal?" he called, his voice steady despite the flutter of nerves.

Wearing only slacks and an undershirt, Hannibal stepped out from the bathroom, his movements fluid yet unhurried. His eyes landed on Will, and he went stock still, his entire body freezing in place. His eyes widened, a flash of surprise and unguarded admiration illuminating his features. Will could see the precise moment Hannibal's expression shifted from surprise to a dark, ravenous hunger, as if he wanted to consume Will right then and there. It was as if every predatory instinct in Hannibal had been revealed, his gaze locking onto Will with primal intensity.

A slow, satisfied smirk spread across Will's face, a spark of mischievous pride igniting in his chest. The effect he had on Hannibal was unmistakable, and it thrilled him to his core. "Hey, baby," he drawled, his voice a teasing caress. He took a single step closer, his eyes never leaving Hannibal's.

Hannibal remained speechless, his eyes roaming hungrily over Will's form. Will felt the intensity of Hannibal's gaze as if it were a physical touch, sending shivers down his spine. He could almost feel Hannibal's eyes tracing the lines of his tuxedo, lingering on how it hugged his shoulders, cinched at his waist, and draped perfectly over his hips and thighs. The heat of Hannibal's stare stoked the embers of arousal simmering within Will.

Will shifted slightly, letting the light catch the subtle shimmer of his midnight navy tuxedo, accentuating the details that Angelo had crafted so meticulously. Hannibal's eyes darkened further, his pupils dilating with a potent mix of desire and approval. The air between them grew thick with desire, the tension making Will's skin tingle.

Will could feel his own pulse quickening, his breath hitching slightly. The thought of Hannibal's touch, the unvoiced promise in his gaze, had Will's arousal beginning to build, a slow burn that started deep in his belly and radiated outward. The room seemed to shrink around them, the space between their bodies charged with a magnetic pull.

Will's heart pounded with a heady mix of arousal and power as he walked over to Hannibal. The room seemed to pulse with the same electric energy coursing through his veins. Hannibal, still stunned by the sight of Will in his perfectly tailored tux, stood motionless, his eyes dark and hungry.

He took advantage of Hannibal's stillness, sliding a hand down to palm the very noticeable bulge in Hannibal's pants. The heat radiating from Hannibal's body, combined with the firm pressure of his erection under Will's hand, sent a thrill straight to Will's core. He leaned in close, his breath warm against Hannibal's ear. "Like what you see, sweetheart?" he murmured, his voice dripping with seduction.

Hannibal's gaze lingered on Will's lips for a heartbeat before traveling back up to meet his eyes. "Yes," Hannibal breathed, the single word heavy with meaning, his voice a low, throaty whisper that sent a thrill coursing through Will.

A low, desperate whine escaped Hannibal's lips, his body shuddering slightly at the contact. The sound was intoxicating, fueling Will's confidence and desire. He tightened his grip slightly, feeling the hardness of Hannibal's arousal pressing against his palm.

"Was being patient worth it?" Will continued, his voice a dark purr, each word laced with intent.

Hannibal nodded eagerly, the dark hunger in his eyes intensifying. His composed demeanor was unraveling, replaced by a raw, desperate need. Will could see the flush rising in Hannibal's cheeks, the slight tremble in his body as he fought to maintain control.

With a wicked grin, Will pulled back slightly and revealed the elegant black box he had hidden in his overnight bag. Hannibal's eyes widened, curiosity and arousal mingling in his gaze, as he inhaled sharply. Slowly, almost reverently, and keeping his eyes locked on Hannibal's, Will opened the box to reveal a sleek, vibrating plug, its surface gleaming under the soft light.

"I want you to wear this tonight," Will murmured, leaning back in so his lips brushed against the shell of Hannibal's ear. The intimate contact sent a shiver down Hannibal's spine, a moan escaping his throat. "There's a remote that I'll be keeping for myself."

Hannibal groaned deeply, and Will could feel the tension in Hannibal's body, the way his breath hitched and his muscles tensed at the prospect. The idea of being controlled, of surrendering to Will's will in such an intimate way, clearly aroused him.

Unable to resist, Will's mouth traveled down Hannibal's neck, his lips leaving a trail of heat as they moved. He found a sensitive spot just above Hannibal's collarbone and latched on, sucking lightly but insistently, marking Hannibal's skin. The act was possessive, a physical claim that made Hannibal's breath hitch and his body shudder with need. Will could feel the pounding of Hannibal's pulse beneath his lips, a tangible response to the control he exerted.

"What do you think?" Will asked, his voice barely above a whisper, the words heavy with promise and desire.

"Yes," Hannibal breathed, his voice strained with need. He reached to take the plug from Will's hand, his fingers trembling slightly. The contact sent a rush of heat through Will, the promise of what was to come heightening his arousal.

Will clicked his tongue at Hannibal, an impish glint in his eyes. "What do you think you're doing?" he asked, his voice a low rumble.

Hannibal looked momentarily confused, his brow furrowing slightly. Before he could respond, Will pressed his advantage. "In the bathroom, slacks and briefs off, hands on the counter," he ordered, his tone leaving no room for argument.

Hannibal hesitated for a heartbeat, then, with a lightly bratty smirk, he replied, "Yes, *sir* . Anything else?" His voice dripped with sarcasm, the defiance in his eyes challenging Will even as he complied, heading back into the bathroom.

Will's heart skipped a beat at the word "sir." He hadn't realized how much that particular form of address would affect him, the sudden surge of power and control it implied. He filed the reaction away for later, considering the possibilities it unlocked in his mind. His lips curved into a small, satisfied smile as he watched Hannibal's retreating form, the sway of his hips enticing and provocative. Will made a quick detour to grab some lube, his excitement building with each step, before following after Hannibal.

Hannibal was waiting in the exact position Will commanded–slacks and briefs discarded, hands braced on the counter. The position showcased the elegant curve of his back, the firm roundness of his ass, and the tension in his muscles, all hinting at the delicious heat coursing through him.

Will's breath hitched at the sight, his eyes raking over Hannibal's exposed form. The way he presented himself, so willingly, so perfectly obedient, was a sight that might never cease to ignite a fierce, possessive fire within him. The smooth expanse of skin, the slight sheen of sweat highlighting every contour, sent another rush of desire coursing through Will's veins.

"Good boy," Will praised, his voice a husky murmur, thick with desire. Stepping closer, Will let his fingers trail lightly down Hannibal's spine, eliciting a shudder from the man beneath him. The tactile sensation of Hannibal's submission was entrancing, each tremor under his touch amplifying Will's arousal.

Hannibal's only response was a soft, desperate moan, his body arching into Will's touch. The sight and sound stirred something primal within Will, a deep, insatiable need to claim, to dominate. He could feel his own arousal pressing against the fabric of his pants, his desire

growing with every second he spent admiring Hannibal's disciplined surrender. Hannibal, in his perfect submission, was a masterpiece, and Will felt a surge of pride and desire as he prepared to take what was his.

Will raised his hand and delivered a gentle smack on Hannibal's ass, the sharp sound of the impact echoing in the tiled bathroom. The flesh gave under his hand, a satisfying jolt that made Hannibal's body tense and his breath hitch. Will's palm tingled with the contact, a delicious reminder of the control he wielded.

Hannibal let out a soft gasp, a mix of surprise and arousal, his fingers tightening on the counter's edge. Will followed the smack with a soothing rub on the same spot, his touch gentle and tender, soothing the sharp sting that lingered. The warmth of Hannibal's skin beneath his hand, the way the muscles quivered under his touch, sent a shiver of satisfaction down Will's spine.

Will opened the lube, the slick, cool substance glistening on his fingers as he applied it generously to the quivering hole before him, as Hannibal's breath came in shallow gasps, his body taut with need at the effort to remain still. Will's touch was teasing at first, his fingers tracing light, tantalizing circles around Hannibal's entrance. He maintained eye contact with Hannibal through the mirror in front of them, his gaze steady and intense. The connection between them was electric, their understanding deepening the intimacy of the moment.

Slowly, Will pressed a finger inside, feeling the tight heat of Hannibal's body enveloping him. Hannibal's eyes fluttered shut, a soft gasp escaping his lips as he adjusted to the intrusion. Will watched the expressions flit across Hannibal's face–the slight furrow of his brow, the way his lips parted with a mix of pleasure and need.

The sensation of Hannibal's muscles clenching around his finger ignited Will. He began a slow, calculated rhythm, each movement calculated to draw out Hannibal's pleasure. The tightness, the heat, the way Hannibal's body responded to his touch, all combined to intensify Will's own desire.

One finger became two, stretching Hannibal open with a gentle insistence. Will's movements were unhurried, savoring the way Hannibal's body yielded to him. He angled his fingers, brushing a knuckle up against Hannibal's prostate, drawing a sharp, involuntary moan from him. The sound was bewitching, a raw, unfiltered expression of the pleasure coursing through Hannibal.

Hannibal's thighs trembled, his head hanging down between his arms as he panted, his breath hitching with each stroke. Will could feel the tension in Hannibal's body, the way he strained to maintain his position, to keep himself open and ready for Will's touch. The sight of Hannibal, so usually composed and in control, now trembling and vulnerable under his hands, was a potent aphrodisiac.

As Hannibal's gasps and moans filled the bathroom, Will's own arousal pulsed in time with his movements. The sight and sounds of Hannibal's pleasure, the raw need in his voice, drove Will wild with desire. He could feel the tension building in Hannibal's body, the way his muscles tightened with each stroke.

Will's breath hitched as he added a third finger, feeling the tightness of Hannibal's body yield to his touch. The sight of Hannibal, so open and vulnerable, took his breath away. He leaned in, pressing a gentle kiss to Hannibal's nape, feeling the shiver that ran through him at the contact.

Once Will deemed Hannibal sufficiently stretched, he leaned in closer, his breath hot against Hannibal's ear. "Ready for the plug?" he asked, his voice deep and husky. Hannibal's whimper was all the answer he needed. With a controlled slowness, Will withdrew his fingers, feeling the tightness of Hannibal's body resist momentarily before releasing. The absence left Hannibal's rim quivering, attempting to clench down on something, anything.

Will reached for the plug, its sleek, tapered design glinting in the soft bathroom light, and he coated the silicone generously with lube, ensuring it would glide smoothly into Hannibal's willing body. His other hand caressed Hannibal's lower back, offering comfort and grounding. "You're doing so well, Hannibal," he murmured, his voice laced with affectionate praise. Will loved the way Hannibal's body responded to his touch, but even more, he reveled in the look of pleasure and submission that praise brought to Hannibal's face. It was a potent combination; seeing the self-contained and assured Hannibal so vulnerable and receptive under *Will's* words was irresistible.

Positioning the plug at Hannibal's entrance, Will began to press it in slowly, savoring every moment. The initial resistance gave way as Hannibal's body accepted the intrusion, his rim stretching as the plug grew wider with every push. Will's eyes were glued to the sight, the way Hannibal's flesh yielded and then tightened, swallowing the plug inch by inch.

A guttural moan escaped Hannibal's lips as the widest part of the plug slid past his rim, his body trembling with a mix of discomfort and arousal. Will's breath caught at the sight, the stark, unguarded display of submission sending a surge of excitement through him. "Look at you," Will whispered, his voice thick with desire. "Taking it so perfectly."

The flared base of the plug settled snugly against Hannibal's crack, the sleek silicone starkly contrasting with the flushed skin of his ass, creating an intensely erotic tableau. Both men moaned, the sound a symphony of shared pleasure and satisfaction. Will couldn't tear his eyes away from the sight, the way the plug nestled so intimately, a visible marker of his control over Hannibal's body.

Will's hand moved to caress Hannibal's ass, his fingers tracing the outline of the plug. He marveled at the sight, his arousal surging as he took in every detail. "You look so good like this," he praised, his voice reverent and filled with lust. "So perfect, so ready for me." He gave a gentle squeeze, feeling the tension in Hannibal's muscles, the way his body quivered under his touch.

With a possessive growl, Will's other hand slid around to Hannibal's front, his fingers brushing over the hard, leaking length of his cock. He wrapped his fingers around the shaft, smearing the pre-come with firm strokes. "Does it feel good?" he asked, his tone both teasing and sincere. "Do you like being filled like this, knowing I'm the one who put it there?"

Hannibal's response was a strangled moan, his body arching into Will's touch. The dual sensation of the plug inside him and Will's hand on his cock was almost too much, a heady

mix of pleasure and submission. “Yes, Will,” he gasped, his voice raw with need. “I love it.”

Will tightened his grip slightly, his thumb brushing over the sensitive head of Hannibal’s cock, eliciting another desperate moan. “Good,” Will drawled, his breath hot against Hannibal’s ear. “I want you to remember this feeling. Remember who made you feel this way.”

He began to pump Hannibal’s cock with a steady, unrelenting rhythm, his other hand still caressing the area around the plug. Hannibal’s body writhed under Will’s ministrations, his gasps and moans growing louder, more urgent. When Hannibal’s hips bucked particularly hard, Will removed his hand and shushed the whine that escaped his lips.

With a grin, looking at Hannibal in the mirror, Will murmured, “We still need to make sure the remote works.” He held the small device in his hand, his thumb hovering over the button. Before Hannibal could protest, Will pressed it, activating the plug to the first setting.

Hannibal’s reaction was immediate and visceral. A keen escaped his lips, his body jerking as the gentle vibrations began. “Will…” His voice was filled with need, a raw, unfiltered sound that sent a shiver of satisfaction through Will.

“Shh, I’ve got you,” Will soothed, his hand smoothing over Hannibal’s lower back. The touch was both praise and comfort, keeping Hannibal present even as the sensations inside him built. Will’s eyes stayed fixed on the mirror, capturing every reaction–each shiver, every gasp–with rapt attention.

“Does that feel good?” Will asked, his voice a low purr. He could see the answer in the way Hannibal’s body responded, the way his muscles tensed and relaxed, the way his breath hitched with each new wave of pleasure.

Hannibal’s head lolled forward, his moans growing louder as the vibrations pulsed through him. Will’s hand moved with purpose, his tough both tender and commanding. “You were made for this, darlin’.” His own arousal was evident in his voice. “To be completely at my mercy.”

A deep, guttural moan tore from Hannibal’s throat, his body trembling under Will’s control. Knowing what it would do to him, Will adjusted the plug, ensuring it was nestled right against Hannibal’s prostate. The effect was immediate, drawing a series of desperate sounds from Hannibal, each one sending a fresh surge of arousal through Will. He could feel his own cock straining against the fabric of his tux, the desire to take Hannibal right there nearly overwhelming.

But he held back, savoring the control, the power. He watched as Hannibal’s body writhed, his hips pushing back, seeking more. The sight, the sounds, the sheer eroticism of the moment was almost too much to bear. “You look so beautiful like this,” Will whispered, his voice thick with desire. “So perfect, so needy.”

Hannibal’s eyes met Will’s in the mirror, his gaze filled with a mix of desperation and adoration. Will’s hand continued its soothing path over Hannibal’s back, his other hand deftly working the remote, adjusting the intensity, playing Hannibal’s body like a finely tuned

instrument. He leaned in, his breath hot against Hannibal's ear. "I could watch you like this all night," he murmured, his voice a dark, seductive promise. "So open, so vulnerable, all for me."

A moment of awe washed over Will. The sheer amount of trust Hannibal placed in him was staggering. Here was Hannibal, the man who commanded respect and fear, completely at Will's mercy, submitting to his every touch and command. The realization sent a thrill through Will, a heady mix of pride and possessiveness. He marveled at the vulnerability Hannibal displayed, the raw openness that he showed only to Will.

But he couldn't let Hannibal climax just yet. With a calculated move, Will turned the plug off, the sudden cessation of vibrations drawing a frustrated whine from Hannibal. Will's hand came down in a gentle smack on Hannibal's ass, the sound sharp in the charged air.

"Not yet, baby," Will reprimanded. "We've got all night."

Hannibal's panting breaths were loud in the silence that followed, his body shuddering with the aftershocks of denied pleasure. Will leaned in, pressing a kiss to Hannibal's nape, savoring the feel of Hannibal's pulse thrumming beneath his lips, the heat of his skin.

"Pants and briefs back up," Will instructed, his voice firm but filled with warmth and affection. "You need to finish getting dressed."

Hannibal let out a shaky breath, his fingers fumbling slightly as he reached for his clothing. Will stepped back, watching with a satisfied smirk as Hannibal composed himself. The sight of Hannibal, still trembling slightly, his body marked by the evidence of their shared intensity, was a powerful image. Will's heart swelled with a mixture of affection and desire, the anticipation of what was yet to come thrumming in his veins.

Will settled into the plush leather seat of Hannibal's Bentley, the luxurious interior wrapping around him like an embrace. The muted hum of the engine–so different from the noise of Will's vehicle–was a soothing backdrop to the city lights that flickered outside the windows, casting a soft, ambient glow that danced across the sleek dashboard. The rich scent of the leather mingled with Hannibal's cologne, creating an seductive atmosphere that heightened Will's senses.

He glanced over at Hannibal, noticing the slight shifts in his posture, the way he adjusted himself every few moments. Will's lips curled into a knowing smile, his hand brushing over the smooth fabric of his tuxedo as he felt the remote tucked securely in his pocket. Each movement from Hannibal was a silent reminder of the plug inside him, providing a constant, low-level stimulation that Will controlled. The power he held over Hannibal in this moment was intoxicating, thrumming through his veins.

The city lights cast long shadows and vibrant hues across Hannibal's face, highlighting the sharp angles and soft curves that Will had come to know so intimately. Hannibal's jaw clenched slightly as he shifted again, a faint sign of the constant, teasing pleasure coursing through him. Will's smile widened, a mixture of pride and affection swelling in his chest.

He finally broke the quiet, his curiosity getting the better of him. “What exactly should I expect this evening?” His voice was steady, but a hint of apprehension lingered beneath the surface.

Hannibal glanced at Will, a small, reassuring smile playing on his lips. “Once we arrive, there will be some pre-show socialization among Baltimore’s elite–tonight, that includes you, Will.” Hannibal gave Will a light wink, adding a touch of warmth to his otherwise composed demeanor. “We’ll have a drink, mingle a bit. The goal is to be seen.”

At Will’s nod of understanding, he continued, “Once it is time for the show to begin, we’ll take our seats in–”

With a smirk, Will interrupted, the sarcasm thick in his voice. “In your own private box, I’m sure.”

Hannibal looked momentarily sheepish, his usual confidence faltering slightly. “Why, yes, actually. We will be sitting in my private box.”

For a moment, Will was stunned, the opulence of a private box at the opera taking him by surprise. But then, his mind began to whirl with possibilities, a sly grin spreading across his face as he considered the opportunities such privacy presented.

His thoughts wandered, imagining the myriad ways he could tease Hannibal with the remote. A secret press of a button could send vibrations coursing through Hannibal, the intensity building as the performance unfolded. Will could picture the way Hannibal’s composure might slip, the stoic mask he wore for the world cracking under the relentless stimulation. He imagined pushing Hannibal to the very edge, watching the way his body tensed, his breath hitching, only to pull back and leave him aching with need.

The hunger in Will’s expression was unmistakable, a predatory glint in his eyes that didn’t go unnoticed by Hannibal. Hannibal’s gaze held a flicker of mild apprehension, a rare sight that made Will’s heart soften. He leaned closer, his voice gentle but firm. “Do you trust me?”

Hannibal nodded, his eyes unwavering. “Of course, *mylimasis* .”

Will’s ears perked up at the unfamiliar word. His brows knitted together in curiosity. Hannibal’s eyes widened slightly, as if surprised by his own slip, and he hesitated, a flicker of uncertainty crossing his features. Will softened his expression, giving a slight nod and a gentle smile, with the hope of encouraging Hannibal to continue.

“It means ‘beloved,’” Hannibal explained quietly, his voice almost a whisper. “Which is what you are to me.”

The endearment hit Will like a physical force, a wave of warmth and emotion washing over him. His heart clenched in his chest, the simple word carrying a weight of affection and commitment that left him momentarily breathless. He reached over, his hand finding Hannibal’s leg, the touch firm and soothing. It was a silent acknowledgment, a wordless exchange of how much they cared for one another.

Will's mind raced, the knowledge that Hannibal felt as Will himself did filled him with a profound relief and joy. He thought about saying the words that lingered on the tip of his tongue, the three simple syllables that could convey the depth of his feelings. But he held back, the timing not quite right. Maybe after the opera, in the quiet intimacy of Hannibal's home, he would finally let those words slip free.

"Thank you," Will murmured, his voice thick with emotion. "That means a lot to me." Not wanting to make Hannibal uncomfortable, Will cleared his throat and continued, "Is there anything else I need to know?"

Hannibal shifted slightly, his demeanor returning to its composed elegance. He outlined the rest of the evening with precision: the first and second intermission where they could stretch their legs and perhaps exchange a few words with other attendees, the social hour following the performance, and finally, the drive back home.

As Hannibal spoke, his use of the word "home" resonated deeply with Will. It felt incredibly right, the idea of returning to a place that was more than just a house, but a sanctuary where they could be together, free from the outside world. The notion wrapped around Will like a warm embrace, filling him with a sense of belonging and contentment.

Will's grip on Hannibal's leg tightened slightly, a silent promise that echoed the sentiment in his heart. This was where he belonged, with Hannibal, in a space that felt like home.

The rest of the drive went smoothly, a comfortable quiet settling between Will and Hannibal. Not much later, the Bentley pulled up to the grand entrance of the opera house, a majestic building illuminated against the night sky. The facade glowed with an ethereal light, the architectural details highlighted in a way that made the structure seem almost otherworldly. Will felt a little intimidated by the grandeur of it all, a pang of anxiety tightening his chest. But then, Hannibal turned to him, his smile warm and reassuring, and the feeling dissipated, replaced with a soothing warmth in his chest.

A valet, dressed in a sharp uniform, approached the car and opened the door with a polite nod. Hannibal stepped out first, his movements fluid and graceful. The valet seemed momentarily taken aback by Hannibal's commanding presence, but quickly recovered, his professionalism never faltering. Hannibal walked around the car, his steps purposeful, and extended a hand to Will.

Will took a deep breath and accepted Hannibal's hand, the cool night air brushing against his face as he stepped out of the Bentley. The touch of Hannibal's hand was comforting, a steadying force that bolstered his confidence.

They walked up the grand steps of the opera house together, their presence striking against the backdrop of the majestic building. Each step felt like a step into a different world, a world of sophistication and refinement that Will had only glimpsed from a distance. As they neared the entrance, the crowd of people mingling in the expansive foyer grew denser, their elegant attire and polished demeanor amplifying Will's nerves.

Will could feel his anxiety bubbling just beneath the surface, a familiar tension tightening his muscles. But he took a deep breath and reminded himself to pull it together. He had been in more dangerous and complex situations than this; he just needed to adapt.

Drawing on his empathy, Will began to observe the other opera-goers closely. He noticed the way they held themselves, their postures exuding an effortless confidence. They moved with a certain grace, a natural ease that spoke of belonging and comfort in their surroundings. Men in well-tailored suits and women in exquisite gowns glided across the marble floors, their expressions serene and composed.

Will allowed himself to absorb these observations, letting the grace and confidence of the crowd wash over him. He imagined himself in their shoes, feeling the weight of his tuxedo as a symbol of his place among them. His breathing steadied as he began to adopt their mindset, borrowing their poise and self-assuredness.

Without consciously thinking about it, Will straightened his shoulders, feeling the fine fabric of his tuxedo shift with him. His back became a little straighter, his chin lifted slightly, and his gait became more confident. Each step he took was more deliberate, more in tune with the refined atmosphere around him. He no longer felt like an outsider peering in; he was part of this world now, if only for tonight.

Hannibal, always perceptive, noticed the transformation in Will. He gave Will a broad smile, his eyes filled with pride and approval. It was a silent acknowledgment of Will's effort, a confirmation that he was not only fitting in but standing out in the best possible way.

Together, they walked through the main doors into the grand foyer. It was alive with the gentle strains of classical music, the melodies weaving through the air and mingling with the soft murmur of conversations. The sound was soothing, a harmonious backdrop to the opulent surroundings. The chandelier's light reflected off the polished marble floors and gilded accents, casting a warm, inviting glow that enveloped the elegantly dressed patrons milling about.

Will and Hannibal moved towards the coat check, their coats slipping from their shoulders into the hands of the attentive staff with practiced ease. As they handed over their coats, Will's eyes roamed the room, taking in the sea of refined faces and the glittering attire that surrounded them. The sense of being part of something grand and exclusive was tangible, and despite his earlier nerves, he found himself settling into the atmosphere.

As they stood there, Will couldn't help but notice the lingering glances cast in Hannibal's direction. Men and women alike seemed drawn to him, their gazes filled with admiration, curiosity, and in some cases, blatant desire. Each look sent a spike of possessiveness through Will, the beast in his chest growling in silent warning. This was *his* Hannibal, and he was not about to share.

However, it wasn't just Hannibal who was attracting attention. Will felt the weight of numerous eyes on him as well, something he wasn't wholly accustomed to. There was interest in those gazes, a curiosity about the man who accompanied Dr. Lecter. He caught a few people staring at him with a mix of intrigue and, he realized with a jolt, lust. It was a new sensation for Will, one that made his skin prickle with both unease and a surprising thrill.

Out of the corner of his eye, Will spotted the bar, a sleek, mahogany counter that promised a moment of reprieve. Without exchanging a word, he and Hannibal began to make their way toward it, their movements perfectly in sync. The unspoken understanding between them was a testament to their deepening bond, each step they took together a silent affirmation of their unity.

As they made their way towards the bar, Will felt a flicker of relief. While he had successfully adopted the confident demeanor of those around him, he knew that a drink would help further steady his nerves. The gentle hum of the crowd, the clinking of glasses, and the rich, warm tones of the bar's woodwork all contributed to a sense of calm that he eagerly embraced.

But as they walked, Will couldn't shake the feeling of eyes following them. His possessiveness flared hotter, compelling him to move closer to Hannibal. He reached out, his hand finding the small of Hannibal's back, an unmistakable claim. Hannibal glanced at him, a knowing smile playing on his lips, but said nothing, allowing Will to guide their path.

Will leaned in, his lips brushing against Hannibal's ear. "You know," he whispered, his voice a low rumble, "everyone here is looking at you. But you're mine."

Hannibal's eyes darkened with pleasure, a shiver running down his spine at Will's words. "And yours I shall remain," he murmured back, his voice equally intense.

Without another word, Will pressed a lingering kiss to Hannibal's cheek, a public yet intimate display that left no doubt about their relationship. Still riding the wave of his newly adopted confidence, Will felt a slight jostle as he accidentally bumped into someone. Turning to apologize, he found himself face-to-face with Margot Verger.

Margot looked absolutely stunning in a deep emerald evening gown, the fabric shimmering subtly under the chandeliers. The gown was floor-length, with intricate beadwork along the bodice that caught the light with every movement. The neckline was daring yet tasteful, balancing elegance with allure. Her hair, styled in soft waves, framed her face perfectly, adding to her air of effortless grace.

The brace she had worn a few weeks ago was conspicuously absent, replaced by an unmistakable aura of confidence and poise. She stood tall, her posture faultless, exuding a sense of empowerment that she wore as armor.

A genuine smile spread across Will's face as he greeted her, "Good evening, Margot." His tone carried a hint of warmth that was both sincere and surprising to him.

Margot returned their smiles, her eyes twinkling with a mix of amusement and curiosity. "Will. Dr. Lecter. So good to see both of you here… together."

Will couldn't help but feel a surge of pride at her words. Being seen with Hannibal, so openly and unmistakably together, filled him with a sense of satisfaction. There was no hiding, no pretense, just the two of them standing as equals in this world of refinement and elegance.

“Hello Margot,” Hannibal said, his voice smooth and inviting, the words carrying an undercurrent of familiarity. “I think I will go fetch us some drinks. Will?”

“Whatever you’re having, thank you,” Will replied, his eyes meeting Hannibal’s with a warm, appreciative look. The warmth in Hannibal’s eyes was mirrored in Will’s, a private exchange in the midst of the bustling crowd.

Hannibal then turned to Margot, tilting his head expectantly. “Can I get you something, Margot?”

She declined with a demure smile, “No, thank you.”

With a nod, Hannibal turned and made his way to the bar, his departure leaving Will and Margot alone amidst the mingling crowd. As Hannibal walked away, Will couldn’t help but notice the way the crowd seemed to part for him, their eyes following his every move. There was a grace and power in Hannibal’s stride that commanded attention, a fact that both filled Will with pride and a slight, possessive edge.

Margot’s gaze followed Will’s, her eyes gleaming with curiosity. “Last I heard, you had tried to have Dr. Lecter killed. He must either be a very good or a very bad psychiatrist to have you accompanying him here this evening.”

Will smirked, feeling the ironic truth of her words settle in his chest. *It must be strange* , he thought, *how our relationship looks to those on the outside.* To the outside world, their relationship was an enigma wrapped in layers of violence and a twisted sort of affection. He scanned the crowd briefly, taking in the elegant figures and sparkling attire. “Hannibal has his methods. Let’s just say, we’ve come to a… mutual understanding.”

Margot raised an eyebrow, her expression a blend of amusement and intrigue. “Mutual understanding, indeed. Amazing how an apparent… change in perspective can bring such clarity.”

Will chuckled, the sound low and rich. He caught the subtle innuendo in her words and responded with a hint of his own. “Yes, a fresh perspective can be quite enlightening.”

Margot’s smile remained polite, but there was a sharp edge to her eyes. “You look… well, Will. Better than the first time we met.”

Will nodded slightly, his gaze flicking to her now brace-free arm. The transformation was striking, and he couldn’t help but admire her resilience. “I could say the same for you, Margot. That gown suits you. You seem to have… shed some weight. Both physically and otherwise.”

Will briefly wondered if anything had actually changed for her, or if she was just putting on a good front. He knew better than most how appearances could be deceiving. Was her newfound freedom genuine, or just a carefully constructed facade to mask the same old torment? The scars of her past were probably still there, hidden beneath the elegance and poise. Will couldn’t help but think about the layers people wore to protect themselves, the masks they presented to the world. He understood it all too well.

Her eyes darkened, just a little. “Thank you, Will. It’s amazing what one can do when given a bit of… freedom.” She took a deep breath, her eyes scanning the elegantly dressed crowd that mingled around them. “Though, I must admit, some days are better than others. Therapy doesn’t work as quickly as some would hope.”

Will’s mouth tightened into a thin line. Mason’s vile nature came to mind, his manipulative, sadistic tendencies. “Patience can be difficult for some. They often expect results without understanding the process.”

Margot nodded, her gaze steady and unyielding. “But we manage, don’t we?”

The words were barely out of Margot’s mouth when Will heard a nasally voice cut through the din, “Margot! Margot, where are you?”

Margot’s posture tightened instantly, a flash of anxiety crossing her face before it smoothed out into a mask of detached calm. “Mason,” she called, her voice carefully controlled, “I’m over here.”

Mason Verger approached, his presence immediately unsettling. He moved with a predatory grace, his eyes gleaming with malice. Will noted the cruel spark in Mason’s eyes, how they were deeply set and shadowed, before flicking over Will with a calculating gaze. The corners of his mouth twitched as if he were perpetually on the verge of a sneer.

“There you are, dear Margot, I’ve been looking for you for ages,” Mason said, his voice dripping with insincerity. He crowded into Margot’s space, gripping her bicep tightly, his ring-clad fingers digging into her skin with possessive cruelty. “I hate to break up the… cozy conversation,” he leered, his eyes sweeping up and down Will’s form with undisguised disdain.

Will’s gaze flicked to Margot, but she was pointedly avoiding his eyes, her own locked on some distant point in the crowd. Her mask of detachment was firmly in place, a shield against her brother’s insidious presence.

Will’s immediate reaction to Mason was visceral. The man exuded an oily unpleasantness that made Will’s skin crawl. The grip on Margot’s arm, the way he invaded her personal space, all spoke of a deep-seated need to control and dominate. Will felt a surge of protective anger on Margot’s behalf, his jaw tightening as he forced himself to remain outwardly calm.

Mason’s grip on Margot’s arm tightened, his fingers white against her skin. “I don’t believe we’ve had the… pleasure,” he mocked when Will didn’t immediately introduce himself.

Will’s eyes narrowed slightly, his instincts flaring. The scent of expensive perfume and cologne mingled with the faint aroma of champagne, creating a heady mix that only heightened Will’s awareness of the malice radiating off Mason. The soft strains of classical music, which had been a comforting backdrop moments ago, now seemed to underscore the menace in Mason’s voice.

Before Will could introduce himself, Hannibal materialized at his side, carrying two glasses of champagne. The sight of him brought an immediate sense of relief; muscles Will hadn’t

even realized were tense began to unwind. Hannibal's presence was a calming force, yet the air of quiet menace he exuded was unmistakable.

"Ah, Mason, I was wondering if we would see you this evening," Hannibal began, his voice smooth and unfailingly polite, yet dripping with a sophisticated disdain that only someone as perceptive as Will could catch. "After running into Margot, I assumed you would be nearby."

Mason's eyes flitted between Hannibal and Will, taking in their close proximity and the subtle signs of their bond. His gaze was unkind, filled with a mix of curiosity and contempt. "Dr. Lecter," he intoned, his voice nasally and grating. "What a pleasant surprise. I didn't expect to see you here with a…" his eyes swept over Will once more, laden with judgment, "date," he finished, the word dripping with derision.

Hannibal's expression remained composed, though his eyes held a glint of cold amusement. "May I introduce you to my companion for the evening, Will Graham?" His tone was unfailingly polite, but there was an edge to it that spoke volumes. He handed Will one of the champagne glasses, his touch lingering for a moment longer than necessary, a silent reassurance.

Mason's eyes narrowed, a flicker of recognition crossing his face. "Will Graham," he repeated, the name rolling off his tongue with an almost palpable distaste. "I've heard quite a bit about you."

Will met Mason's gaze steadily, his grip on the champagne glass firm. "I'm sure you have," he replied, his voice calm but laced with a quiet intensity. Margot stood slightly apart, her expression carefully neutral but her eyes betraying a flicker of anxiety. The grip Mason had on her arm was still unrelenting, a silent assertion of his control.

Hannibal, ever the master of social graces, seemed to sense the undercurrent of tension. He tilted his head slightly, a faint, almost imperceptible smile playing at the corners of his lips. "It's always a pleasure to encounter the Vergers," he said smoothly, the words laced with an irony that wasn't lost on Will.

Mason's expression soured, his eyes flashing with irritation. "Indeed," he muttered, his grip tightening on Margot's arm. "Unfortunately, Margot and I have some business to attend to. You know what they say, all work and no play."

Hannibal inclined his head slightly, his eyes never leaving Mason's. "Of course," he replied, his tone still polite and above reproach but with an edge that spoke of unspoken threats and deeper currents. "Enjoy your evening, Mason. Margot."

Mason's eyes flitted to Will one last time, a sneer curling his lips before he turned away, tugging Margot along with him. "Let's go, Margot," he said, his voice sharp. "We have more important matters to attend to."

As they disappeared into the crowd, Will exhaled slowly, the tension in his body dissipating further. He glanced at Hannibal, feeling a wave of gratitude and admiration for the way he had handled the situation. Hannibal's presence was a fortress, a shield against the malice that Mason exuded.

“He really is a pig,” Will murmured, his voice low enough that only Hannibal could hear.

“Indeed,” Hannibal agreed, his eyes still following the path the Vergers had taken. “But let’s not let our thoughts linger on the Vergers this evening.” He turned to Will, his gaze softening, the cold edge fading as he focused entirely on his companion.

They began to walk across the room, sipping their champagne. The effervescence tickled Will’s palate, the crisp bubbles a welcome distraction from the tension that had hung in the air moments before. The ambient sounds of the opera house filled the space around them: soft strains of classical music, the gentle hum of conversation, the clink of glasses. Hannibal nodded at a few acquaintances as they moved through the crowd, acknowledging them with a polite smile before stopping to chat briefly.

“Hannibal, what a pleasant surprise,” a distinguished older man greeted them warmly.

“Good evening, Charles,” Hannibal replied, his smile effortless and charming. “May I introduce you to my companion, Will Graham.”

Charles extended his hand to Will. “A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Graham.”

“The pleasure is mine,” Will responded, shaking Charles’s hand with a firm grip.

They continued through the crowd, pausing here and there as Hannibal exchanged pleasantries with a few more acquaintances. Each time, Hannibal introduced Will with a sense of pride that did not go unnoticed. Will felt a mix of admiration and slight apprehension at how naturally Hannibal navigated these social interactions.

As they moved further into the room, Will’s eyes flicked over the opulent surroundings, appreciating the craftsmanship of the marble columns and the intricate details of the architecture. His earlier nerves had been soothed, partly by Hannibal’s reassuring presence and partly by the champagne, which now settled comfortably in his stomach.

Will stole a glance at Hannibal, admiring how impeccable he looked in his tuxedo. The cut of the fabric accentuated his lean, muscular frame, and his posture exuded a refined elegance. Hannibal handled all the social graces with ease, his every movement calculated and graceful, looking like he belonged in this world of sophistication and opulence. A pang of self-doubt hit Will, a brief despair over how naturally Hannibal fit into this setting.

Catching sight of themselves in a gilt framed mirror adorning the wall, Will saw the two of them standing side by side. His own reflection, dressed in the finely tailored tuxedo, radiated a quiet strength and confidence he hadn’t fully recognized before. In that moment, he realized that he looked the part. He belonged with Hannibal. And more importantly, Hannibal belonged to him.

As they made their way through the room, Will leaned in closer to Hannibal. His breath was warm against Hannibal’s ear, sending a shiver down the other man’s spine. “How are you feeling, baby?” he murmured, his voice barely audible over the ambient noise.

Hannibal's eyes darted around, scanning the crowd for any potential eavesdroppers. But everyone else was engrossed in their own conversations, the social elite of Baltimore oblivious to the charged undercurrent between the two men. Will took another light sip of his champagne, the cool liquid refreshing against the warmth of his lips.

Focusing back on Will, Hannibal's eyes flickered with a mix of amusement and arousal. His pupils dilated slightly, and a faint flush colored his cheeks. He responded in a low, controlled voice, "I feel… exquisitely stimulated, Will." The words were laden with a promise, the tension between them sparking anew.

Will's lips curled into a knowing smile, the earlier tension with Mason forgotten. He leaned in closer, his hand brushing against Hannibal's as they walked. The soft lighting highlighted the sharp angles of Hannibal's cheekbones, the smooth line of his jaw. Will's gaze lingered on Hannibal's lips, the memory of their taste still fresh in his mind.

Hannibal's voice was a soft murmur, meant only for Will. "Your presence here, dressed so impeccably, is… enchanting." His eyes were dark with desire, a slip of the polite façade he still wore for the benefit of those around them.

A thrill ran through Will's veins and he leaned in closer, his lips brushing against Hannibal's ear as he spoke. "I've noticed how your eyes haven't strayed far from me." His voice was low and sensual, meant for Hannibal only. "Even with all of these people around, watching you with lust, watching me with envy… your gaze on me is hypnotic."

Hannibal's breath hitched at Will's words, the intensity of his gaze deepening. "How could they not?" he whispered, his voice thick with emotion. "You command my attention completely."

Will smirked, his hand sliding down Hannibal's arm, fingers brushing against the pulse at his wrist. "Good. Because tonight, I'm going to keep you on edge. You're mine, Hannibal. Every part of you." His eyes flickered with possessiveness as he spoke, the erotic charge between them sparking.

Hannibal's pupils dilated further, the dark hunger in his eyes intensifying. He leaned in, his lips barely grazing Will's ear. "And I am more than willing to be yours, Will. Every part of me belongs to you."

They reached the bar, their movements in perfect sync, a testament to the unspoken understanding between them. Hannibal ordered another round of drinks, his voice steady but his eyes betraying a flicker of excitement. Will leaned against the bar, watching Hannibal with a predatory gaze, knowing exactly how he was affecting him.

The bartender handed them their drinks, and Hannibal raised his glass to Will. "To an evening that promises to be… unforgettable."

Will clinked his glass against Hannibal's, his smile wicked and possessive. "To us."

Chapter End Notes

buckle up y'all, the opera is only just getting started!!!

y'alls comments and kudos fuel me so go hit all the buttons if you enjoyed this chapter :)

and PLEASE come yell about this fic with me on tumblr at gracieread shannigram!!

(at the very least, pls reblog the the chapter post?)

The Opera, Part 2

Chapter Notes

my dog of 13 years passed this morning, so posting this a few days early to make myself feel better and give y'all a little treat <3

beta'd by EnmitiesSaddestGlare and Jay_Is_A_Rat, love you both!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will and Hannibal made their way through the elegantly dressed crowd, drawing a few curious glances from other patrons as they moved with a quiet confidence. Hannibal, with a hand on Will's lower back to guide him, merely nodded in acknowledgment and continued on. The rich scent of polished wood and expensive perfume filled the air, adding to the sense of opulence that surrounded them. Will felt the weight of their gazes but brushed it off, focusing on the man beside him.

Hannibal led them to a secluded staircase that climbed to the private boxes. The plush carpet underfoot muted their steps, and the soft murmur of voices faded as they ascended. Their private box was a short walk from the top of the steps, and Hannibal opened the door with a smooth, practiced motion. The interior was lavishly furnished, with rich velvet curtains framing the doorway and plush seating inviting them to relax. Ambient lighting cast a warm, intimate glow over the space, and the décor exuded an air of exclusivity and refinement, designed for comfort and discretion.

Will's eyes roamed the room, taking in the thick curtains and strategic lighting that cocooned them in privacy. The soft click of the door closing behind them reverberated in the enclosed space, enhancing the feeling of isolation from the bustling opera house below.

They settled into the plush seats, the cool, smooth fabric pressing against Will's palms. Hannibal's gaze briefly swept across the stage, absorbing the preparations for the performance, before landing back on Will. The look in Hannibal's eyes–a blend of admiration and curiosity–made Will's heart skip a beat.

Will took a deep breath, allowing the atmosphere to envelop him. The sound of muted conversations and the faint strains of the orchestra tuning their instruments drifted up from the main hall, creating a backdrop of anticipation. The stage was set, the evening poised to unfold, and in the privacy of their box, Will felt a thrilling mix of nerves and excitement.

"Hannibal, tell me about La Traviata," Will asked, his voice a hushed whisper.

Hannibal leaned in closer, his breath warm against Will's ear as he began to speak in a low, cultured tone. "La Traviata," he started, "is a story of love and sacrifice, set against the backdrop of Parisian high society."

A tingling sensation coursed through Will as Hannibal's breath grazed his skin, sending shivers down his spine. The air around him filled with the scent of Hannibal's cologne–rich spices mingling with an undertone that was distinctly Hannibal. The fragrance enveloped Will, drawing him into a embrace of familiarity and intimacy.

Hannibal continued, his voice weaving a spell. "The first act introduces us to Violetta Valéry, a beautiful courtesan who hosts a lavish party at her home. There, she meets Alfredo Germont, a young man who has admired her from afar."

As Hannibal spoke, Will could almost see the resplendent setting, the glittering chandeliers casting a dazzling light over elegantly dressed guests–not dissimilar from the opera house in which they were currently sat. He imagined Violetta, radiant and captivating, her presence commanding the attention of all who beheld her. Hannibal's narration brought the characters to life, each word painting vivid images in Will's mind.

"Alfredo, enamored with Violetta, confesses his love for her. Despite her initial skepticism, Violetta is moved by his sincerity," Hannibal's voice was a soothing balm, each word resonating with emotion.

As Hannibal recounted the blossoming romance and the challenges that lay ahead for Violetta and Alfredo, Will felt a connection to the characters. The parallels between the opera's narrative and his relationship with Hannibal added a layer of poignancy to the evening. As Hannibal's voice softly narrated the unfolding drama, Will felt the weight of their shared history and the inevitability of their intertwined fates.

The lights in the opera house dimmed, casting the audience into a soft shadow, and the murmurs of conversation faded into a hushed anticipation. Will and Hannibal exchanged a glance, the dim light highlighting the excitement that danced in Will's eyes.

As the curtain rose, the stage was bathed in a warm, golden light, and an opulent Parison salon was revealed. The set was a masterpiece of art and design, transporting the audience to another era. Will's breath caught in his throat as he took in the scene, every detail meticulously crafted to perfection.

Violetta Valéry, radiant and captivating, made her entrance, her presence commanding the stage. She moved with grace and confidence, the embodiment of charm and allure. The music swelled, a lush and emotive composition that captured Will's attention completely. He felt the notes resonate within him, drawing him into the story. Only distantly aware of Hannibal beside him, Will was wholly absorbed by the performance.

Will's gaze was fixed on the stage, his senses attuned to every nuance. The dynamic between Violetta and Alfredo was palpable, the burgeoning tension and romance between them creating a magnetic pull. He could feel the electricity in their interactions, the unspoken longing and the hesitant hope that mirrored his own relationship with Hannibal.

As Violetta began her aria, her voice soared beautifully, filling the opera house with a mix of strength and vulnerability. Each note spoke of her character's inner turmoil, and Will was entranced, his heart aching with the raw emotion conveyed through her performance.

When Alfredo stepped forward to confess his love, his voice was rich with passion, every word dripping with sincerity. The raw emotion in his plea pulled Will further into the narrative, the intensity of Alfredo's feelings echoing in the depths of his own soul. Will couldn't think about anything aside from the story unfolding before him, the outside world having long faded into insignificance.

The first act concluded with a powerful ensemble, the characters' voices blending in a stunning crescendo. The music rose to a fever pitch, the emotions of the scene culminating in a breathtaking display of vocal prowess. As the curtain fell and the house lights rose slightly for intermission, Will found himself momentarily dazed, the spell of the performance still holding him in its grasp.

Will blinked, coming back to reality as the applause died down and the house lights rose. He turned to find Hannibal watching him with an incredibly amused expression, the corners of his mouth twitching upwards in a subtle smile.

"I must admit, Will," Hannibal began, his voice dripping with playful insinuation as his smile widened, "I was expecting your focus to be… elsewhere."

A wave of realization washed over Will–Hannibal had expected him to be using the remote for the vibrating plug to tease him during the performance. Instead, Will had been entirely captivated.

He chuckled, still feeling the afterglow of the performance's impact. "I have to admit, I didn't expect to get so swept up in it," he said, genuine surprise coloring his tone. The music, the drama, the raw emotion–it had all pulled him in so deeply that he had forgotten everything else.

Hannibal's eyes gleamed with satisfaction, a hint of pride evident in his gaze. "It was enthralling to see you enjoying the opera so thoroughly," he replied, his voice warm and sincere. "I cannot bring myself to begrudge you your enjoyment."

Will smirked, an impish gleam dancing in his eyes. "Well, we still have the second and third acts. Plenty of time to make up for the lost opportunity," he quipped, his voice low and suggestive.

Hannibal's blush was almost imperceptible, a slight flush that tinted his cheeks. He smiled at Will, affection plain in his expression. The promise of the evening ahead hung between them, adding an electric undercurrent to the air. As they stood to stretch and prepare for the intermission, the tension between them crackled with the promise of what was yet to come.

Hannibal stood, extending his hand to Will. Will accepted it, rising with a smooth motion that echoed Hannibal's grace. They exited their private box, their presence going unnoticed in the hustle and bustle of intermission beginning. The air outside was abuzz with chatter and the soft clinking of glasses, as people mingled and discussed the performance.

Will leaned in slightly toward Hannibal. "I think I might need a bit of liquid courage to face all this mingling," he murmured, glancing around. He couldn't help but think that he would feel more at ease analyzing crime scenes than navigating this particular social labyrinth.

Hannibal's eyes twinkled with amusement and understanding. "A glass of champagne should do the trick," he replied smoothly. "Perhaps two."

As they made their way to the bar, their steps were perfectly in sync. Will felt a mix of pride and nervousness, acutely aware of the eyes on them. He walked a little taller, the weight of Hannibal's presence beside him grounding him. He couldn't help but flush at the envious glances thrown their way, knowing they made a striking pair.

At the bar, Hannibal smoothly ordered a whiskey for Will and another glass of champagne for himself. The bartender nodded, moving with practiced efficiency.

As they waited for their drinks, Will leaned in close, his lips brushing the shell of Hannibal's ear. "Do you like having me here with you, where everyone can see that you belong to someone?" he murmured, his voice carrying a mix of curiosity and possessiveness.

Hannibal's eyes sparkled with amusement as he turned slightly to face Will. "Oh, I do enjoy it, Will," he replied smoothly. "Although it seems it doesn't stop the staring."

Will chuckled, a low, intimate sound. "No, it doesn't. But maybe that's part of the fun." He cocked an eyebrow in Hannibal's direction, wondering when he had begun to enjoy stares from strangers, but knowing that Hannibal would agree.

Hannibal's gaze darkened with a hint of mischief. "Do you enjoy being watched, Will? Knowing that everyone can see us together, see how much I belong to you?"

Will felt a shiver of excitement run through him at the suggestion. "Maybe I do," he admitted, his voice dropping to a husky whisper. "Maybe I like knowing that they're all watching, wishing they could have what we have."

Hannibal's eyes gleamed with dark amusement. "They can look all they want, as long as they can see you are spoken for."

Will's lips curved into a slow, predatory smile. "And do you think they can see how much I crave you, Hannibal? How every look and touch is a declaration of my desire?" He felt a rush of satisfaction at the idea that their bond was so evident, so powerful, that it couldn't be ignored.

The air between them seemed to thicken with charged tension, the ambient noise of the bar fading into the background. Will felt his breath hitch slightly, his pulse quickening. Hannibal leaned in closer, his breath hot against Will's ear. "Oh, they see it, Will. Our bond is undeniable. It's a powerful thing, impossible to ignore."

Will's hand found its way to the small of Hannibal's back, his touch firm and possessive. "Good," he murmured, his breath warm against Hannibal's ear. "Let them watch. Let them see how much I enjoy claiming you, how much pleasure it brings me to know that you are mine."

Hannibal's eyes fluttered closed for a moment, reveling in the electric sensation of Will's words and touch. He whispered back, "And I enjoy being yours. Every single second of it."

The admission sent a surge of warmth through Will, his heart swelling with a fierce pride and possessiveness.

Will was surprised by how much he was enjoying the attention. For so long, he had done his best to fade into the background, to avoid drawing any unnecessary notice. Yet here he was, reveling in the display of their relationship, finding a new kind of enjoyment in being seen with Hannibal.

The realization was both startling and exhilarating. Will could feel his arousal growing at the thought of being watched, at displaying and being displayed. He leaned in closer to Hannibal, his lips brushing against his ear. “It’s turning me on a little,” he admitted, a sly grin spreading across his face. “Knowing that they can see us, that they know you’re mine.”

Hannibal’s eyes darkened with a mix of amusement and desire. “Then let’s give them something to envy,” he murmured, his voice deep with seduction.

Will’s heart pounded as he felt the intensity of Hannibal’s words. He leaned in, closing the distance between them, and captured Hannibal’s lips in a kiss that was just a touch too passionate for the refined setting of the opera house. The kiss was slow and deliberate, a dance of tongues and lips that left no doubt about their connection. Hannibal’s hand slid up to cradle the back of Will’s neck, deepening the kiss with a possessive intensity that sent a shiver down Will’s spine.

The surrounding conversations and clinking glasses seemed to fade away as they lost themselves in the moment. Hannibal’s other hand rested firmly on Will’s hip, pulling him closer, pressing their bodies together. Will could feel the heat radiating off Hannibal, their shared breath mingling as the kiss continued, tongues exploring and teasing.

Just as Will felt the world narrowing to just the two of them, the bartender returned with their drinks, breaking the spell. They reluctantly pulled apart, their breaths coming in soft pants, lips slightly swollen from the intensity of their kiss. Hannibal handed Will his whiskey, their fingers brushing in a deliberate caress that sent another jolt of electricity through Will. They clinked glasses, and pushed off from the bar.

As they wandered deeper into the crowd, they were intercepted by an elegant woman in her late fifties, adorned in an exquisite gown that glittered under the ambient light. Her warm, genuine smile radiated kindness and grace.

“Dr. Lecter!” she exclaimed, her eyes sparkling with delight. “It’s wonderful to see you here… and with a date, no less!” She pointedly looked at their flushed lips and slightly mussed attire, a knowing smile playing on her lips.

Hannibal inclined his head politely, a rare genuine smile touching his lips. “Mrs. Komeda, a pleasure as always.” Will noticed the warmth in Hannibal’s expression, realizing that Hannibal actually liked Mrs. Komeda. This small revelation put him more at ease.

Mrs. Komeda’s gaze shifted to Will, her smile widening. “And who might this be? You must be very special to accompany Hannibal tonight. He doesn’t usually bring dates to these events.”

Will felt a deep swell of pride as the elegant woman approached them. The attention only reinforced his confidence, making him proud to be seen with Hannibal. He straightened, meeting her gaze with assurance. Before he could respond, Hannibal stepped in smoothly.

“Elaine, allow me to introduce Will Graham,” Hannibal said, his tone rich with affection. “Will, this is Mrs. Elaine Komeda, a dear friend and a prominent supporter of the arts.”

Will extended his hand, offering a polite smile. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Komeda.”

Mrs. Komeda’s smile widened even further. “The pleasure is mine, Mr. Graham. Hannibal speaks very highly of you. It’s wonderful to finally meet the man who has captured his attention.”

Will glanced sideways at Hannibal, his eyebrows raised in a mixture of surprise and curiosity. *You’ve spoken about me before?* his eyes seemed to ask. Hannibal, completely unabashed, met Will’s gaze with a small, knowing smile. Will found that he didn’t mind at all; in fact, the idea that Hannibal spoke of him with such regard only filled him with warmth and pride.

Hannibal’s hand slid around Will’s waist, pulling him closer. He leaned in, his breath warm against Will’s temple as he nuzzled him affectionately. The intimate gesture made Will’s heart race. “Will is indeed very special,” Hannibal said, his tone warm and possessive. “He’s not only my companion for the evening but someone I, as I am certain you can tell, hold in the highest regard.”

Will’s heart swelled at Hannibal’s words, a blush creeping up his neck. He glanced at Hannibal, seeing the unmistakable adoration in his eyes, and felt a warmth spread through him. If he had known that this was what being in public with Hannibal felt like, he might have sought it out more often.

“How wonderful! It’s so rare to see Hannibal so… enamored.” Her delight was evident, and she couldn’t help but tease Hannibal. “You’ve kept this gem hidden for too long, Hannibal.”

Hannibal’s eyes twinkled with pride as he responded, “Will has a way of making one… submit to new experiences. Quid pro quo, my dear Elaine. It was time he had a new experience or two at my behest.”

Will felt a jolt at Hannibal’s choice of words, his mind briefly wandering to the more private aspects of their relationship. The subtle innuendo wasn’t lost on him, and he could feel the heat rising in his cheeks. He stole a glance at Hannibal, whose composed exterior betrayed nothing but a hint of amusement in his eyes.

Will cleared his throat softly, hoping to steady himself. “Yes, well, it’s all about balance, isn’t it?” he said, his voice steady despite the flutter of excitement in his chest. He felt Hannibal’s hand brush lightly against the small of his back, a subtle, reassuring gesture that sent another ripple of warmth through him.

Elaine chuckled, clearly picking up on the undercurrent of their exchange, but gracious enough not to comment further. “I’m sure you both have plenty to teach each other,” she said,

her tone light and conversational, yet with a knowing twinkle in her eye. “So, Will,” Mrs. Komeda continued, “how have you found the performance this evening?”

Will flashed a charming smile, feeling more confident under Hannibal’s affectionate gaze. “To be honest, this is my first real exposure to the arts. I’m usually more comfortable in waders, standing in a stream fishing. But tonight has been… a pleasant surprise.”

Elaine’s smile widened, clearly impressed. “A man of diverse interests. That’s wonderful to hear. You seem to be adapting quite well.”

Hannibal leaned in slightly, his voice smooth and filled with subtle innuendo. “Will has an exceptional talent for adapting to new things. He embraces every experience with… remarkable enthusiasm.”

Thankful he had taken a swallow of champagne *before* Hannibal spoke, Will wondered what had gotten into him tonight. Aside from the plug, of course. The usually reserved and controlled man was openly affectionate and full of subtle innuendo, a side of Hannibal that Will had only glimpsed behind closed doors. With a slight shock, Will realized that Hannibal was genuinely happy here with him. The thought sent a warm rush through his chest, and he found himself leaning into Hannibal’s touch even more.

Will’s eyes sparkled with a mix of playful teasing and genuine happiness. He tilted his head slightly, giving Hannibal a look of mock accusation. “Are you trying to make me blush, Hannibal? Because it’s working,” he teased, his voice light and filled with warmth.

Hannibal’s eyes crinkled with amusement, clearly enjoying the moment. “I merely speak the truth, Will,” he replied, his tone both sincere and laden with underlying affection.

The realization that Hannibal was not only comfortable but also reveling in this public display made Will’s heart swell. He felt an infectious joy bubbling up inside him, breaking through the usual restraint he maintained in public. He let out a soft laugh, the sound mingling with the chatter around them.

Will leaned in closer, his voice a whisper meant only for Hannibal’s ears. “If I didn’t know any better, I’d say you’re enjoying this as much as I am.”

Hannibal’s gaze softened, and he brushed a tender kiss against Will’s temple. “Perhaps I am,” he murmured, the intimate gesture drawing them even closer.

Elaine, observing their interaction, smiled warmly. “It’s wonderful to see you both so happy,” she said, her tone filled with genuine pleasure.

As they stood there, comfortably tucked into each other, a sudden flash went off, momentarily startling Will. The bright light cut through the elegant ambiance, capturing a brief moment of their intimacy. He looked up to see a photographer capturing the moment. The photographer lowered his camera, giving a polite nod before moving on, seemingly satisfied with the candid shot he had taken.

Will was a bit surprised but not upset. He glanced at Hannibal, who seemed completely unfazed by the attention. Will assumed that this must be normal for him, accustomed to the limelight and the curious eyes of society. He put it out of his mind, focusing instead on the warmth and pride he felt being at Hannibal's side.

The lights flickered gently, indicating that the audience should return to their seats. The soft chimes signaling the end of the intermission added a sense of urgency to the crowd's movements. Elaine turned to them with a warm smile. "It was truly lovely to meet you, Will. I hope to see much more of you in the future."

Will returned her smile, feeling genuinely appreciated. "Thank you, Mrs. Komeda. I look forward to it."

Hannibal nodded in agreement, his eyes gleaming with pride. "Indeed, Elaine. Until next time."

They exchanged farewells, and Will felt a sense of belonging that was both unfamiliar and thrilling. As they walked back to their private box, the noise of the mingling crowd and the soft strains of the orchestra tuning their instruments filled the air.

He felt Hannibal's eyes on him, and when he looked up, their gazes locked. There was a shared understanding, a mutual anticipation that made Will's pulse quicken. The evening was far from over, and Will intended to make every remaining moment count.

Once they re-entered the privacy of their box, Will's mind buzzed with his plans for Hannibal. He closed the door behind them, and the darkness of the dimmed lights provided the perfect cover for what he had planned. He leaned in close to Hannibal, his breath warm against Hannibal's ear. "I hope you're ready," he whispered, his voice dripping with seduction. "Because I have every intention of making this second act unforgettable."

Hannibal's eyes darkened with a mixture of desire and apprehension, his breath hitching at Will's words. The overture for the second act began, the swell of the orchestra rising as Will's hand slipped into his pocket, retrieving the remote for the vibrating plug.

Will turned the device on at a low setting, the hum of the vibration barely perceptible over the music, yet enough to cause Hannibal to shift slightly in his seat. The subtle jolt of pleasure made Hannibal's grip on the armrest tighten, his knuckles turning white.

Leaning closer, Will's lips brushed against the shell of Hannibal's ear, his voice a husky whisper. "Remember, we're here to enjoy the show," he murmured, the double meaning clear in his tone. "At least, *I'm* here for *a* show."

Hannibal's breath hitched, a visible shiver coursing down his spine as the vibrations intensified. Will's gaze was unwavering and predatory, savoring every reaction. The tight clench of Hannibal's jaw, the deepening flush spreading across his cheeks, and the quickening of his shallow breaths all fueled Will's desire to push him further, to see just how far he could take Hannibal before he broke.

Leaning back in his seat, a smug smile played on Will's lips. He kept the remote subtly hidden in his hand, its power a delicious secret. The arias and duets of the opera enveloped them, the tragic beauty unfolding on stage amplifying the raw, obscene intimacy of their private game.

Hannibal seemed to be adjusting to the sensations, his earlier squirming subsiding. Will would have none of that. His fingers deftly manipulated the remote, the soft hum of the plug escalating to a more insistent rhythm. Hannibal let out a yelp, the sound lost beneath the swelling music, but Will felt it reverberate through him. He leaned in closer, his lips brushing Hannibal's ear, the warmth of his breath sending another shiver down Hannibal's spine.

"Be. Quiet," Will rumbled, his voice firm. The command was electric, making Hannibal's composure falter. "You don't want everybody to know what I'm doing to you, do you?"

Hannibal's response was a strained, breathless exhale, his eyes dark with lust. Will's fingers turned up the intensity again, relishing the way Hannibal's body tensed and trembled. The high-back seats provided just enough cover, but the rush of being so exposed, yet hidden, sent a buzz of arousal through Will.

"Or maybe you do?" Will continued, his voice dripping with seduction. "Maybe you want everyone to see how needy and desperate you are," Will murmured, his voice a filthy whisper. "How you can barely keep it together, even in a place like this. Is that what you want, Hannibal? To be my desperate little slut in front of everyone?"

Will watched as Hannibal's breath hitched; he smirked, feeling the power of his words and the effect they had on Hannibal. He pressed the remote again, increasing the intensity, and saw the subtle signs of Hannibal's control slipping further. "You like that, don't you? Being so fucking desperate for me. I bet you'd come right here if I told you to, wouldn't you?"

Hannibal's eyes met Will's, a pleading look within them that sent a jolt of arousal through Will. There was a wildness there, a raw, unfiltered need that spoke volumes. Hannibal's breath came faster, and he closed his eyes briefly, inhaling deeply to keep himself from coming. The idea of being so exposed, so vulnerable in front of others, only seemed to heighten Hannibal's arousal. The flush on his cheeks deepened, his pupils dilating as he fought to maintain his composure.

Will watched every reaction with a predatory gleam, feeling the power he held over Hannibal. It was intoxicating, the way he could reduce the composed, controlled Hannibal to this quivering state of need. His body responded, the tightness in his pants a reminder of his own arousal. He leaned in again, his voice a husky whisper against Hannibal's ear. "You're doing so well," he murmured, his tone both praising and possessive. "But I wonder, how much more can you take? How far can I push you before you break?"

Will turned the remote up another notch, watching as Hannibal's body tensed, his breath catching in his throat. Hannibal's hands gripped the armrests, his knuckles white, as he fought to keep his composure. His cock strained against his trousers, the vibrating plug driving him to the brink.

“You love this, don’t you?” Will taunted, his voice a dark, seductive growl. “Being on the edge, so close to losing control. Knowing that at any moment, someone could look over and see just how desperate you are for me.”

Hannibal’s response was a strangled moan, his eyes half-lidded with lust. The thought of being caught, of someone seeing him in this state, seemed to push him further into his arousal. Will could see it in the way Hannibal’s body trembled, in the way his breath hitched with every pulse of the vibrator.

Will’s hand slid down to Hannibal’s thigh, squeezing it possessively. “That’s right,” he whispered. “You’re mine. Every part of you belongs to me. And I’m going to make sure you never forget it.”

The opera’s dramatic scene unfolded on stage, a stark contrast to the intimate, erotic game playing out in their private box. Will’s focus was solely on Hannibal, the music and performance serving as a backdrop to their own private show.

Making eye contact with Hannibal, he slowly began to unzip his own pants, the sound of the zipper almost drowned out by the music from the stage. Hannibal’s eyes widened with realization, a dark hunger flaring in them. Will’s lips curled into a wicked smile as he gave a barely perceptible nod, a silent command that Hannibal obeyed without hesitation.

Hannibal slid off the plush seat onto his knees, the thick carpeting cushioning them. Will was pleased; the luxurious setting meant he didn’t have to worry about Hannibal’s comfort, at least in that regard. Will was confident that Hannibal could not be seen by any opera attendees, but the thrill of being so exposed, so potentially visible, only heightened the arousal that thrummed between them.

Will’s fingers played with the remote, changing the settings, and Hannibal shuddered as the vibrations intensified inside him. The movements of Hannibal’s head in Will’s lap became more insistent, his mouth working with practiced skill. Will’s fingers threaded through Hannibal’s hair, guiding him, the silky strands slipping through his fingers.

The sensation was overwhelming, the warm, wet heat of Hannibal’s mouth around him, the way Hannibal’s tongue swirled and licked with expert precision. Will’s head tipped back, a soft groan escaping his lips, lost in the swell of the music. The rush of their obscene act, hidden yet dangerously exposed, sent a rush of blood southward, making him even harder.

Leaning forward slightly, Will’s voice dropped even lower, a filthy purr. “Look at you, so needy and desperate. I bet you’d come just from this, wouldn’t you? From being my good little slut right here, where everyone could see how fucking wrecked you are.”

Hannibal’s muffled moans around Will’s cock were a symphony of submission, each sound vibrating through him, driving Will closer to the edge. The slight increase in Hannibal’s pace, the way he eagerly took more of Will into his mouth, confirmed Will’s suspicions. Hannibal loved the idea of being caught, of someone seeing him on his knees, performing such a debased act.

“You love the idea of being caught, don’t you?” Will whispered, his voice thick with arousal. “Of someone seeing you like this, Count Doctor Hannibal Lecter, the Eighth, on his knees. For me.”

Hannibal’s response was immediate, a quiet groan of agreement, the vibrations sending a jolt of pleasure through Will. The intensity of the moment, the forbidden nature of their actions, pushed Will closer to the brink. His grip tightened in Hannibal’s hair, guiding him with more urgency.

Will watched Hannibal struggle, the sight of him becoming increasingly desperate sending a surge of power and arousal through him. Each choked noise, each trembling movement only fueled his desire. With a cruel smile, he played with the remote, changing the settings sporadically, enjoying the way Hannibal’s body reacted, the way he struggled to maintain control.

“Stay quiet,” Will reminded him, his voice a mix of command and tease. Hannibal’s eyes danced with a mix of submission and defiance, his breath hitching as the vibrations intensified. Will couldn’t resist taunting him further. He pulled Hannibal off his cock, a string of saliva connecting them briefly before breaking. Hannibal’s lips were swollen and glistening, his eyes dark with desire and frustration.

“You have a choice,” Will said, staring down at Hannibal with a predatory grin. “You can come right here, in your pants,” he paused, eyes flicking down to where Hannibal was palming himself, “or if you’re a good boy and patient, I’ll let you fuck me however you want when we get home.”

Hannibal’s eyes fluttered open, the desperation in them clear as he struggled to control himself. His breath was ragged, his body trembling with the effort to hold back. The vibrations from the plug continued, a constant, teasing presence that threatened to push him over the edge. He licked his lips, his eyes locked onto Will’s, the unspoken desire clear.

“Decide, Hannibal,” Will whispered, his tone relentless. “Show me how much you need this. Show me how much you need me.”

“I want to wait,” Hannibal bit out, his voice hoarse with need. “I want to fuck you when we get home.”

Will’s grin widened, a glimmer of pride and satisfaction in his eyes. He had pushed Hannibal to his limits and still, Hannibal chose to hold back for the promise of more. “Good boy,” Will murmured, his voice low and intimate as he reached down, caressing Hannibal’s cheek with surprising tenderness. The contrast between his filthy words and the gentle touch was intoxicating. He could feel the shiver that ran through Hannibal at the praise, the way his body responded eagerly to every bit of affection Will offered. “Now get back to work.”

Hannibal rushed to obey, his mouth closing around Will’s cock once more. He kept his grip tight in Hannibal’s hair, guiding him with a mix of dominance and affection. The music from the stage swelled, a dramatic crescendo that matched the intensity of their illicit act. Will’s eyes fluttered shut, his breath coming in short, sharp gasps as Hannibal’s mouth worked him skillfully.

“Fuck, Hannibal,” Will groaned, his voice barely audible over the music. “You’re so good at this. So fucking perfect.”

The heat of Hannibal’s mouth enveloped Will, each rhythmic movement sending shivers down his spine. Knowing they could be caught at any moment, heightened every sensation. Hannibal’s tongue swirled with expert precision, and his groans vibrated against Will’s sensitive flesh, pushing him closer to the edge.

Will’s breath quickened, his fingers tangling in Hannibal’s hair, urging him on. The pressure built, coiling tighter and tighter until he could no longer hold back. With a final, deep thrust, his control snapped. A choked groan escaped his lips as his body tensed, pleasure crashing over him in intense waves. Hannibal’s throat worked around him, swallowing every drop, his own arousal evident in the way he moaned around Will’s cock.

As the last shudders of his climax subsided, Will gently pulled Hannibal up, their eyes locking in a moment of shared understanding. Will’s chest heaved, his heartbeat still pounding in his ears. He leaned in, his lips brushing against Hannibal’s ear, his breath warm and ragged. “You did so well,” he whispered, his voice dripping with genuine admiration and lingering lust. “I can’t wait to get you home.”

Will’s hand cupped Hannibal’s cheek, a tender yet possessive gesture. He looked into Hannibal’s eyes, searching for any signs of discomfort. “Are you okay?” he asked softly, his tone warm and caring, a gentle shift from the previous intensity.

Hannibal nodded, his breath still uneven but his eyes clear and determined. “More than okay, Will.”

Will’s lips curled into a small, satisfied smile. He patted Hannibal’s cheek lightly, the touch a blend of affection and command. “Sit back in your seat,” he instructed, his tone firm but gentle. “The plug stays on. Remember, you’re not allowed to come.”

Seeing the strain in Hannibal’s eyes, Will decided to grant him a small reprieve. He discreetly turned the remote’s intensity down to a low, teasing hum, just enough to keep Hannibal on edge without pushing him over. The subtle shift provided a brief respite, allowing Hannibal to gather himself for the remainder of the performance.

Each aria, each orchestral swell, seemed to amplify the tension between them. Hannibal’s breath was shallow, his knuckles white as he gripped the armrests, trying to maintain a semblance of control. The exquisite torment was etched on his face, his eyes flicking occasionally to Will, seeking both reassurance and command. Will, watching him with a predatory gaze, felt a rush of power and satisfaction at the sight of Hannibal’s struggle.

As the final notes of the performance lingered in the air, Hannibal sat with his composure visibly fraying, his body taut with a mix of arousal and relief. His usually impeccable facade was slightly cracked, his breathing uneven, and a faint flush coloring his cheeks. Despite this, he maintained a semblance of control, the disciplined mask he wore slipping but not shattering.

Will leaned in close, his breath hot against Hannibal's ear, the intimate proximity sending shivers down Hannibal's spine. "You've been such a good boy," Will murmured, his voice a blend of praise and promise. With a flick of his thumb, the vibrator shut off, ending their own private show.

A look of profound relief and gratitude crossed Hannibal's face, his eyes closing briefly as he absorbed the words and the tension in his body eased. "Just have to get through one more intermission and act," Will continued, his tone gentle yet commanding. "Would you like a drink?"

Hannibal nodded, his voice unsteady, but tinged with undeniable pleasure, as he replied, "Yes, please."

He then took his time ensuring they both looked presentable, his hands moving with deliberate care and possessiveness. He smoothed down Hannibal's tuxedo, his fingers brushing against the fabric and the firm muscles underneath, feeling the heat radiating from Hannibal's body.

As they prepared to leave the box, the intimacy of their shared experience still hung heavily in the air. The soft click of the door behind them felt like a seal on the intensely private world they had just shared. Hannibal leaned in close, his breath warm against Will's ear. "May I take a moment in the bathroom to clean up?"

"Of course," Will nodded, a devilish spark glinting in his eyes. "But remember to leave the plug in."

Hannibal's lips curved into a subtle smile, a silent acknowledgment of Will's command. He headed off to the nearest bathroom, his stride purposeful yet composed. Will watched him go, satisfaction curling in his chest as he remembered how disheveled Hannibal had been just minutes earlier.

He turned towards the bar, mind still buzzing from the intensity of their encounter. The noise of the opera house seemed distant, almost muted, as he replayed the scene in his head. His body was still thrumming with arousal, every nerve on edge. He could feel the residual heat in his cheeks, the lingering tension in his muscles, and the persistent ache in his groin. The thought of Hannibal, equally affected and desperately trying to maintain his composure in the bathroom, sent another wave of heat through him.

Will made his way to the bar, his steps deliberate but quick, fueled by the residual desire still humming through his veins. The bar area was crowded, filled with patrons discussing the opera's performance, their voices blending into a low, sophisticated murmur. The warm light from the chandeliers cast a golden hue over the polished wood and crystal glasses, creating an atmosphere of elegance and refinement.

As he approached the counter, Will scanned the crowd, his eyes sharp and observant. He waited for the bartender to notice him, his patience wearing thin after the night's excitement. Each second felt prolonged, his mind replaying the scenes from the private box, the raw intensity of Hannibal's touch, and the electrifying control he had wielded. The anticipation of continuing their night hung heavily in the air, making the wait almost unbearable.

Just as the bartender caught Will's eye, an older man, dressed in a tailored suit, noticed Will standing alone. The man's eyes lit up with interest, a predatory gleam that was almost amusing; it couldn't hold a candle to the glint Will had seen so often in Hannibal's gaze. He sidled up to Will, a confident, practiced smile on his lips.

"Well, hello there," the man said smoothly, his voice dripping with charm. "Can I buy you a drink?"

Will forced a tight smile, letting a flicker of irritation show. He couldn't help but be amused, thinking of how Hannibal would eat this guy alive if he were here to witness the scene. "No, thank you. I'm ordering for my date and I."

The man's smile didn't waver, but a calculating look flashed in his eyes. "A shame, really. I don't see your date around. You shouldn't be left waiting all alone."

Will's polite facade was wearing thin. He imagined Hannibal's predatory gaze and how quickly he'd put this man in his place. "I appreciate the offer, but I'm fine."

The man leaned closer, his tone turning slightly patronizing. "Come on, just one drink. I promise I won't bite."

Will's jaw clenched, his eyes narrowing slightly as genuine irritation burned through his veins. "Really, I'm not interested." He thought, *If there's any biting to be done, it's not going to be by you.*

Just then, the bartender arrived, ready to take Will's order. Before Will could speak, the older man interrupted, "I'll have two glasses of your finest wine for my friend here."

The audacity of this guy. Will cut in sharply, his voice firm. "No, thank you. I'm here with my partner."

The man's expression darkened slightly, but he forced a charming smile. "Well, where is this partner of yours? I'd hate to see you neglected."

Neglected? Will felt a surge of protectiveness and annoyance. The thought of anyone thinking Hannibal would ever neglect him was laughable. "My partner is on his way, and I assure you, I'm far from neglected."

The man's eyes flicked over Will's form, a thinly veiled hunger in his gaze that made Will's skin crawl. As if sizing him up for a meal. Will's irritation grew, his patience wearing thinner by the second. He could almost see Hannibal's eyes darkening, his smile turning dangerous at the sight of this interaction.

The man's eyes flicked over Will's form, a thinly veiled hunger in his gaze that made Will's skin crawl. "You're quite something, you know. It's not often someone catches my eye like this."

As the man's words hung in the air, a cold shiver ran down Will's spine. He opened his mouth to retort but felt a shift in the atmosphere as Hannibal reappeared. His partner's

demeanor was icy, his usual polished charm a thin veil over a possessiveness that was almost tangible. The air seemed to thicken with an underlying menace.

Hannibal stepped up beside Will, his presence commanding and intimidating. His eyes, dark and unreadable, were fixed on the older man with an intensity that made Will's pulse quicken with both relief and excitement. The older man, sensing a shift but not understanding its depth, turned to face Hannibal.

"Is there a problem here?" Hannibal's voice was soft, almost polite, but it carried a razor-sharp edge that sent a shiver through Will.

The older man, oblivious to the danger, extended his hand with a practiced smile. "I was just keeping your friend company. I'm–"

Hannibal didn't let him finish. His voice, now a cold, precise blade, cut through the man's sentence. "I asked my partner, not you."

The older man's hand faltered mid-air, his confidence visibly shaken. The charm that had seemed so effortless a moment ago drained away, replaced by uncertainty. He took a step back, the smug expression on his face replaced by fear.

Hannibal's gaze never left the older man, who now seemed much smaller under the weight of Hannibal's scrutiny. "Will, is there a problem here?" he repeated.

Will looked from Hannibal to the older man, a cold smile curving his lips. He could feel the power shift, the way Hannibal's presence alone had dismantled the man's bravado. It was a heady sensation, being defended so fiercely. He leaned closer to Hannibal, his voice smooth and confident. "No problem at all," he said, his eyes never leaving the man's. "The gentleman was just leaving."

The older man mumbled an apology, turning on his heel and retreating into the crowd, his previous bravado utterly shattered.

Hannibal's eyes, dark with possessiveness, locked onto Will's. "Darling, may I have a word? In private?" His voice was smooth but carried an undertone that made Will's heart skip a beat, a rush of arousal mingling with a flicker of fear. He wasn't sure what to expect, but the intensity in Hannibal's gaze was electrifying.

Without waiting for a response, Hannibal grabbed Will's hand, his grip firm and possessive. He tugged him along with a silent intensity that left no room for argument. The air around them seemed to crackle with tension, Hannibal's fury barely contained. His eyes were cold and calculating, his jaw clenched tight as they moved through the crowd.

Will sensed the dangerous aura emanating from Hannibal. For the first time in a while, his instincts screamed "dangerous," yet he knew Hannibal was not going to actually harm him. Instead, the danger was directed outward, a protective and possessive fury aimed at anyone who dared encroach on what was his.

As they walked, Will picked up on Hannibal's emotions loud and clear: possessiveness, jealousy, rage. Each step seemed to pulse with the raw energy of Hannibal's barely restrained anger. Will's heart pounded, a mix of excitement and a deep satisfaction at being the focus of such intense emotion.

Will tried to explain, his voice edged with frustration. "I was trying to get rid of the guy–"

Hannibal cut him off tersely, his voice like a razor's edge. "Darling. Not here." The command was sharp, slicing through the air with an authority that left no room for argument.

Will felt the force of Hannibal's words, a chill of excitement running down his spine. The sheer dominance in Hannibal's tone made Will immediately fall silent, his heart pounding in his chest. He could sense the storm brewing within Hannibal, the possessive fury that was barely contained.

A shiver of arousal coursed through Will, his cock hardening at Hannibal's display of control. There was something deeply thrilling about being on the receiving end of Hannibal's wrath, the darkly erotic power he wielded. The possessive beast in Will's chest perked up in recognition reveling in the mirrored intensity and possessiveness, feeding off Hannibal's need to claim him.

Hannibal's stride was purposeful–predatory–as he led Will down the hall. Each step echoed with a silent intensity, the air thick with tension and unspoken desire. Expertly navigating the opera house, Hannibal found a single-stall bathroom, quickly checked if it was occupied, and dragged Will inside, locking the door behind them with a decisive click.

Without a word, Hannibal shoved Will against the wall, his hands gripping Will's shoulders with a bruising intensity. Will's breath hitched, the raw power and emotion coursing through Hannibal tangible against his skin in the confined space. He felt the tiled wall pressing into his back, the chill seeping through his tuxedo. The faint scent of antiseptic cleaner lingered in the air, mingling with the combined scent of himself and Hannibal. The bathroom was impeccably well-stocked for the wealthy patrons of the opera, with a basket of fine toiletries on the marble counter–silk hand towels, luxury hand lotion, breath mints, and a selection of upscale grooming products, each item neatly arranged and exuding an air of refined opulence.

But the majority of Will's focus was on the man gripping him so tightly. Hannibal's face was inches from Will's, his eyes blazing with a dark fire. The control he usually maintained so meticulously had slipped, revealing the monster that lurked beneath. Will's heart pounded in his chest, each beat resonating like a drum. A heady blend of fear and arousal coiled in his gut, his breaths coming in short, sharp gasps as the adrenaline surged through his veins. In that moment, seeing Hannibal lose control was a validation of everything Will had yearned for, his own need rising to meet Hannibal's with equal intensity.

"Do you think the ownership goes one way?" Hannibal snarled, his voice dangerous, each word laced with raw possessiveness. "That you do not equally belong to me?"

Will's breath caught as Hannibal's words, thick with his accent, sent a shockwave of arousal through him. Each syllable resonated deeply, unlocking something instinctual–base–within himself. It was as if a mirror had been held up, reflecting his own darkest desires and the

possessive beast that roared to life inside him. Seeing Hannibal lose control was more than exhilarating; it was deeply affirming, arousing, and profoundly right.

His cock throbbed painfully, reacting to the sheer dominance in Hannibal's tone. It was a heady mix of fear and arousal, the recognition of Hannibal's authority over him sending a thrill of excitement coursing through his veins. Every nerve in his body seemed to be on fire, his skin hypersensitive to the slightest touch, the raw emotion in Hannibal's voice making him feel utterly exposed and vulnerable. Will felt an overwhelming urge to submit to Hannibal, to show him that Will belonged to him in all the ways Hannibal had done the same for Will.

Will's breath came in ragged gasps, his heart pounding in his chest as he met Hannibal's fierce gaze. The hunger and determination in those eyes made him feel seen in a way he had never experienced before. "I never doubted it," he breathed, his voice trembling with a mixture of surrender and acknowledgment. The admission felt like a weight lifted off his shoulders, a declaration of his own submission that sent a jolt of arousal straight to his core.

"Good," Hannibal hummed, his voice dripping with dark intent. "Because you are mine, Will. And I intend to remind you of that."

In that moment, Will knew he belonged to Hannibal completely, his body and soul claimed by the man who stood before him. Hannibal's words reached into a hidden part of Will, soothing an insecurity he hadn't fully acknowledged until now. The realization hit him like a drug, a rush that left him breathless and dizzy. A sense of purpose and clarity settled over him, as if a missing piece of his soul had finally clicked into place. He was Hannibal's, and nothing could change that. Their bond was unbreakable, a deep, visceral connection that defied mere words. The intensity of it all filled him with a profound sense of peace and belonging, knowing he was truly seen and understood. The feeling was overwhelming, a heady mix of arousal, relief, and raw emotion that left him trembling in Hannibal's embrace.

With a feral intensity, Hannibal lunged forward, claiming Will's mouth in a bruising kiss that left no room for doubt about his intentions. The kiss was a violent collision of lips and teeth, tongues tangling in a desperate dance. Hannibal's lips were relentless, pressing hard enough to bruise, his teeth nipping at Will's lower lip, sending sharp jolts of pleasure-pain through him. Will could taste the faint copper tang of blood, the flavor only heightening his arousal.

Hannibal's hands moved with barely controlled fury, gripping Will's collar and bowtie. He tore at the fabric with a raw, animalistic strength, the sound of ripping cloth mingling with their heavy breaths. Will felt the buttons pop, the bowtie slipping away, leaving his neck exposed and vulnerable. Hannibal's mouth descended with a savage hunger, teeth grazing over the sensitive skin before biting down hard enough to leave marks. The sharp sting of pain mixed with the heat of Hannibal's breath and the wet, soothing touch of his tongue, creating a maddening blend of sensations that left Will gasping and arching against him.

Hannibal's kisses trailed down Will's neck, each one a branding mark of possession. He sucked and bit at the tender flesh, leaving a path of dark, blossoming bruises in his wake. The force of his mouth, the way he ravaged Will's skin, spoke of a need so deep and consuming that it left Will trembling. Each bite, each lick, was a declaration of ownership, a silent

promise that Will belonged to him and him alone. The intensity of it all was overwhelming, a heady mix of dominance and submission that made Will feel completely and utterly claimed.

Will hadn't realized how badly he needed this from Hannibal until now. The fierce possession, the raw dominance–it spoke to a part of him that had always craved being seen and claimed so completely. All his life, he had fought to maintain control, to keep the darkness within him at bay. But with Hannibal, he didn't need to hide. The brutal, unrestrained nature of their connection was liberating, allowing him to surrender in a way he had never experienced before. This was what he had been yearning for: to be devoured, to be held so tightly that he could finally let go.

Will's heart pounded, a potent mix of desire and reassurance flooding his senses. Hannibal's actions were feral, driven by an unrestrained need that matched Will's own. The roughness of Hannibal's hands as they roamed over his body, the way they dug into his flesh with a bruising intensity, made Will keen. The sound seemed to ignite something feral within Hannibal, who responded with a deep, rumbling growl, the sound resonating through his chest like a predator claiming its prey. The vibration of it sent a fresh wave of arousal through Will's trembling form, his body arching instinctively into Hannibal's touch.

Hannibal's hands roamed over Will's body with an unrestrained hunger, gripping and tugging with a force that promised bruises. Each touch was electric, sending jolts of pleasure and pain through Will's already heightened senses, as Hannibal's fingers dug into his flesh, leaving indents that spoke of possession and control. The animalistic intensity was overwhelming, and Will reacted with an almost desperate need to hold onto something solid. He bit at Hannibal's neck, teeth sinking in just enough to leave a mark, his fingers fisting Hannibal's shirt in a white-knuckled grip as if holding onto reality itself.

Hannibal growled again, this time with approval and dominance, his breath hot and ragged against Will's skin. Will's body responded eagerly to the dark passion Hannibal unleashed upon him, the physicality of their connection driving him to new, dizzying heights of arousal. His own need surged, the force of Hannibal's dominance igniting a matching hunger within him. Will's nails raked down Hannibal's back, leaving red trails in their wake, each one a lasting display of the raw, unfiltered desire that coursed between them.

Will pulled back from where he had bitten Hannibal's neck, their breaths mingling in the heated air. Their foreheads pressed together, eyes locking with an intensity that mirrored their shared hunger.

"Hannibal," Will gasped, his voice thick with need. "Please…"

Hannibal didn't stop the relentless grinding of his hips, the deep, hard rhythm making it nearly impossible for Will to think. The friction and heat of their grinding hips heightened the intensity of the moment, their bodies moving in a fierce, almost desperate dance. Each thrust sent waves of pleasure coursing through Will, filling the edges of his mind with static.

Hannibal's voice dropped to a guttural, predatory snarl, "You said I could fuck you, darling. I intend to do that now. Here."

Will's body reacted instinctively to Hannibal's words. His muscles tensed and relaxed in rapid succession, his body quivering under the weight of Hannibal's touch. The grinding pressure of Hannibal's hips sent shockwaves through him, each thrust igniting a fire in his belly that spread outward, making his entire body burn with need. Will's pulse raced, pounding in his ears, each beat synchronizing with the fierce rhythm Hannibal set. His throat felt dry, yet he couldn't stop the whines and gasps that escaped his lips.

The air around them was thick with the scent of sweat and arousal, a heady mix that made Will's head swim. His vision blurred at the edges, the world narrowing down to the intense connection between them. His hips bucked instinctively, seeking more of the maddening friction, his cock straining for release. Every fiber of his being was attuned to Hannibal, the primal need to submit and be claimed by the man above him consuming him utterly. His fingers dug into Hannibal's shoulders, gripping tightly as if holding on to the last thread of sanity amidst the storm of sensation.

With a swift, precise movement, Hannibal spun Will around, roughly pressing his chest into the wall. The sudden shift in position left Will momentarily breathless, as he tried to comprehend the shift in position. Before he could fully process what was happening, Hannibal yanked his pants and briefs down to his knees, exposing him completely.

Will's heart raced, a heady mix of excitement and trepidation flooding his senses. He felt Hannibal's presence looming behind him, the palpable power emanating from him making Will's knees weak. For a moment, the intensity threatened to overwhelm him. He squeezed his eyes shut, taking a deep breath to steady himself. He needed to calm down, to hold back from the edge that he was already teetering on. The sensation of the cold tile against his chest and thighs helped, grounding him just enough to regain a sliver of control.

Hannibal's hands roamed possessively over Will's exposed flesh, each touch deliberate and unyielding. Will bit his lip, focusing on the rhythm of his breathing, trying to temper the burning need that roared within him. The rough pads of Hannibal's fingers skated over his hips and down his thighs, sending jolts of pure sensation through him. Will's body trembled, every inch of him hypersensitive and yearning, but he held on, determined not to let the moment slip away too soon.

Hannibal knelt behind Will, his hands gripping Will's hips with a firm, possessive strength that promised no escape. The sheer dominance in Hannibal's touch sent a feral charge through Will's body, heightening the raw, electric atmosphere between them. Hannibal spread Will's cheeks apart with deliberate slowness, the cool air hitting his exposed skin and making him shiver with anticipation.

Hannibal's breath was hot against Will's entrance, a pleased rumble coming from his chest, sending a jolt of arousal straight to Will's core. Will's breath hitched, his mind a whirlwind of need and surrender, every nerve ending alive with expectation. Hannibal's tongue flicked out, lightly teasing Will's entrance, the initial contact igniting sparks of pleasure that had Will keening softly. The teasing was maddening, each touch of Hannibal's tongue a tantalizing promise of the ecstasy to come.

Hannibal's tongue moved with a fierce purpose, tracing circles around Will's entrance before plunging in just enough to make Will moan. The warmth and wetness of Hannibal's mouth

against such a sensitive spot made Will's legs tremble uncontrollably. Hannibal licked with fervent intensity, each stroke of his tongue a raw blend of possessiveness and adoration. He alternated between light, fluttering licks and deeper, more insistent strokes, driving Will wild with need.

As Hannibal continued his ministrations, Will felt a profound recognition surge through him. This control, this possessiveness, was exactly what he craved. It was like staring into a dark, twisted mirror, seeing his own deepest desires reflected back at him. In that moment, Will knew they were two halves of the same savage whole, each completing the other in a dance of dark passion and unwavering possession.

Hannibal's tongue dove in deeper, his movements growing more fervent, licking and sucking with an animalistic intensity that left Will gasping and writhing. The heat of Hannibal's mouth, the expert way he used his tongue, was overwhelming, each flick and thrust sending electric jolts of pleasure through Will's entire body. The wet, obscene sounds of Hannibal's mouth working on him filled the small bathroom, mingling with Will's desperate groans and whimpers.

The relentless assault on his senses was almost too much to bear, the pleasure so intense it bordered on exquisite agony. Will's breath came in ragged gasps, his voice, broken and pleading for release, echoed around them, an instinctual cry of submission. The pleasure built rapidly within Will, each touch of Hannibal's tongue pushing him closer to the precipice. He could feel Hannibal's possessiveness in every stroke, every lick, a tangible expression of their connection. The intensity of the sensations, combined with how close he felt to Hannibal in this moment, created a heady mix of pleasure and pain that drove Will to the brink of ecstasy.

Will's breath came in frantic gasps, his body trembling with a desperate need that only Hannibal could satisfy. His hands scrabbled against the tiles, seeking purchase as he thrust his hips back, pressing into the heat of Hannibal's mouth. "Hannibal… please…" he managed to utter, his voice thick with urgency and raw desire, the plea echoing in the charged air between them. His entire being was consumed by the need to be claimed, every nerve ending alight with the fire that only Hannibal could ignite.

Hannibal grunted in response, the sound vibrating against Will's sensitive skin as his hands slid down to Will's thighs, the touch both soothing and possessive. His fingers caressed the tender flesh, igniting sparks of pleasure with every stroke.

Will's back arched involuntarily as Hannibal's hand moved to his entrance, the sensation causing a jolt of arousal to surge through his body. He felt the pressure build as Hannibal slowly inserted a finger, the intimate intrusion a perfect blend of pain and pleasure that made him press harder into Hannibal's touch.

Will's own hands moved, gripping Hannibal's wrist, urging him on. He pressed back against Hannibal's fingers, his hips moving in a rhythm that matched Hannibal's. His body was alive with sensation, every nerve ending attuned to Hannibal's touch.

"Oh god…" Will's voice trembled with need, each word barely more than a breathless moan. The sensation was overwhelming, his body reacting instinctively to the expert movements of Hannibal's hand.

Hannibal's finger worked in and out, the rhythm unhurried yet deliberate. His tongue continued to tease around the edges, each flick and swirl a tantalizing promise of deeper pleasure. Will's breath hitched as Hannibal added a second finger, the stretch intense but delicious, pushing him closer to the precipice of ecstasy.

As Hannibal's fingers curled inside him, they found that perfect spot that made Will see stars. His vision blurred, his body trembling with the force of the sensations coursing through him. Hannibal's fingers moved with a practiced precision, each thrust driving him higher, the pleasure almost too much to bear.

Will grew louder; his body was a taut line of need, every nerve ending alight with desire. He felt himself being drawn closer to the edge, the intensity of Hannibal's touch pulling him inexorably towards his climax. Will's breath came in short, desperate gasps, his body trembling uncontrollably. He ground back harder against Hannibal's hand, his movements frantic. "Hannibal, I… I'm so close…" he managed to gasp, his voice barely coherent amidst the torrent of pleasure crashing over him. His cheek slipped against the tile, his entire body straining towards release, every muscle tensed and ready to snap.

Hannibal's fingers thrust deeper and faster, matching the rhythm of his tongue's relentless assault. Each movement was precise, calculated to drive Will higher, closer to the edge. Hannibal's fingers curled inside Will, the rough pads hitting that perfect spot repeatedly, each touch pushing him closer to his breaking point. His muscles tensed, every nerve ending alight with sensation as the wave of his orgasm built to an unbearable intensity.

Hannibal purred against Will's skin, the vibration of his words sending shivers down Will's spine. "Let them hear you, darling, let them all know you belong to me."

Those words were the final push Will needed. The thought of being heard, of others knowing exactly what was happening, ignited his climax, and it hit with the force of a tidal wave, crashing through his body, every nerve ending aflame with intense pleasure. His body convulsed, muscles tightening and releasing in a desperate rhythm. A guttural cry tore from his throat, raw and unrestrained, echoing off the walls of the small bathroom.

The sensation was overwhelming, a searing rush that started deep within and radiated outward. His muscles clenched around Hannibal's fingers, the tightness heightening the ecstasy that coursed through him. Each wave of pleasure was more intense than the last, his body wracked with shudders as he was pushed into an abyss of unrelenting sensation.

Will's climax seemed endless, each spasm drawing more cries from his lips, his entire being lost in the overwhelming pleasure. Will's vision blurred, his senses overloaded with the raw intensity of his orgasm. His release spilled onto the floor, hot and sticky, the physical manifestation of the pleasure Hannibal had drawn from him. The pulses of his climax seemed endless, each contraction of his muscles sending another jolt of sensation through him.

Hannibal's fingers remained buried inside him, pressing against that perfect spot, prolonging the waves of ecstasy that crashed over Will. His tongue continued its relentless teasing, pushing Will further into the depths of his orgasm. Each flick of Hannibal's tongue, each curl of his fingers, sent another surge of pleasure through Will's trembling body.

Will felt utterly possessed, every inch of his being claimed by Hannibal's touch. The intensity of the orgasm left him feeling vulnerable and exposed, yet deeply connected and protected. His mind was a haze of pleasure, his body a conduit for the raw, primal energy that Hannibal unleashed within him.

As the waves of his climax began to subside, Will's breath came in ragged gasps, his body trembling from the aftershocks. The sensations slowly faded, leaving him in a state of blissful exhaustion. The feeling of Hannibal's possessiveness, his dominance, lingered, a comforting weight that grounded Will even as he floated on the remnants of his ecstasy.

Hannibal gave him no time to recover. The sharp sound of the lube being applied filled the room, the slick, obscene noise sending another wave of arousal through Will's already oversensitized body. Hannibal's urgency left no room for thought, and he barely had time to process the sensation of Hannibal's fingers spreading his hole, the cool lube both soothing and igniting his overstimulated nerves.

Will felt the blunt pressure of Hannibal's cock against his entrance, and with a sharp, possessive thrust, Hannibal was inside him. The burn was immediate, even with the preparation. Hannibal had used just enough lube to ease the way, but the initial penetration was intense, a sharp edge of pain that quickly mingled with overwhelming pleasure.

Will's mind was a blissful blank, his senses overloaded by the stretch of being filled so completely. The pleasure mingled with the sharp edge of pain, creating an overwhelming sensation that left him breathless. His voice broke, a hoarse, guttural sound that echoed in the small bathroom. "Hannibal… oh fuck…"

Hannibal's thrusts were relentless, each movement deliberate and powerful. The slick, wet sounds of their bodies joining filled the air, mingling with their ragged breaths and the low, animalistic noises that escaped from both of them. Will's body instinctively clenched around Hannibal, every muscle taut with the raw, visceral sensation of being filled so completely.

Hannibal's hands gripped Will's hips with a bruising force, holding him firmly in place as he snarled into Will's neck, his voice low and dangerous. "You belong to me, Will. Every part of you. Do you understand? Mine." The words were a potent declaration, each syllable coated with lust and possessiveness, the sound sending a thrill down Will's spine. The sensation of Hannibal's cock driving into him with relentless force sent waves of pleasure and pain crashing through him, each thrust a brutal claim that left him gasping for breath.

Hannibal's breath was hot and ragged against the nape of Will's neck, his teeth grazing the sensitive skin of Will's neck, adding another layer of sensation to the already overwhelming experience. Between rough thrusts, Hannibal's voice cut through the haze of pleasure and pain. "You feel that, Will? That's me claiming you. Over and over." His voice dropped even lower, taking on a dangerously dark edge. "I'll kill anyone who thinks they can have you, Will. You're mine. Only mine."

Will nearly collapsed with pleasure, his legs trembling as his mind went completely blank, reduced to static. The words were a brutal, beautiful truth, each one sinking deep into Will's soul. His only focus was on Hannibal's cock, his voice, everything else fading into oblivion. "Hannibal… please…" he managed to utter, the words barely a sigh.

Hannibal's thrusts grew more forceful, and Will responded with equal fervor, his body moving in time with Hannibal's, meeting each thrust with a desperate need to be filled, to be claimed. As if sensing Will's mounting desperation, Hannibal's hand snaked around, firmly grasping Will's untouched, leaking cock. The grip was unyielding, sending a jolt of pleasure that ripped through Will's body.

Hannibal began to stroke Will's cock in perfect sync with his thrusts, the dual sensations creating a storm of ecstasy that pushed Will closer to the edge. "Come for me, Will," Hannibal rasped, his voice rough with possessive intensity. "Show me you're mine."

Will's heart pounded at Hannibal's words, the sheer possessiveness and intensity making his arousal spike even higher. The raw declaration of ownership resonated deep within him, igniting a fire that burned hotter with each passing second.

"Yes, Hannibal, yours," Will gasped, his breath coming in ragged bursts. He felt the possessive beast in his chest settle, content and preening, recognized by Hannibal's matching intensity. The feeling of being utterly claimed, of belonging entirely to Hannibal, was intoxicating.

The pressure built rapidly within both of them, a rising tide of tension that threatened to overwhelm. Will's body was taut, every nerve ending on fire as the pleasure coursed through him. The intensity of Hannibal's strokes increased, becoming more frantic and erratic as he neared his own climax.

Just as Will was teetering on the brink of release, Hannibal's teeth sank into his neck with a deliberate, possessive force. The initial pain was sharp, intensifying the overwhelming pleasure coursing through Will's body. It was as if Hannibal was branding him, marking him as his own in a way that was both carnal and deeply intimate.

"Hannibal!" Will cried out, the sound raw and filled with unrestrained ecstasy.

Their climaxes hit simultaneously, the intensity of their release shaking them to the core. Will's cock pulsed in Hannibal's hand, his release spilling over Hannibal's fingers in hot, thick streams. Hannibal's own release was hot and deep inside Will, marking him from the inside out, a claiming that went beyond the physical.

As Will's climax continued, the pain from Hannibal's bite became a focal point, a grounding sensation amidst the overwhelming pleasure. His body convulsed, every muscle contracting as he shuddered through the waves of ecstasy. The feeling of being filled, claimed, owned by Hannibal was intoxicating, a heady mix of pleasure and submission that left him breathless.

The longer Hannibal bit down, the more the pain morphed into something transcendental. Will's body trembled, caught between the sharp agony and the waves of ecstasy that radiated through his body. The feeling of being filled, claimed, owned by Hannibal amplified the intensity of the sensations flooding through him. It felt as though every inch of his being was ablaze, each pulse of pain from the bite intensifying the pleasure coursing through him.

Hannibal's tongue flicked out, soothing the abused skin, the warmth contrasting with the sting of his teeth. His heart pounded, his blood roaring in his ears, every beat synchronizing

with the fierce rhythm of Hannibal's possession.

As their climaxes subsided, Hannibal's teeth slowly withdrew from Will's neck, leaving a throbbing, tender mark. The bite remained, a constant reminder of Hannibal's dominance. The lingering pain was a thread connecting him to the man behind him, a physical manifestation of the bond they shared. It was a mark that would fade with time, but the memory of it, the sensation of being claimed so thoroughly–Will knew it would stick with him for far longer.

Will's heart still raced, his body flush with the aftershocks of their intense encounter. He could feel Hannibal's chest rising and falling against his back, the steady rhythm of his breath a stark contrast to the chaotic whirlwind of sensations they had just shared. He felt Hannibal nuzzle into his hair, the gesture tender and grounding, pulling him back into the present.

Hannibal, though quiet, was attentive. His hands roamed over Will's body, fingers tracing over the marks and tender spots with a gentle yet possessive touch. Will shivered as Hannibal's hands found every spot that ached with a pleasant soreness, the remnants of their fierce encounter.

Amidst the physical tenderness, Will spotted a flicker of emotional turmoil in Hannibal's eyes. Hannibal pressed a light kiss to Will's forehead, the gesture tender and almost reverent. Will could feel the undercurrent of Hannibal's unease, the remnants of the emotional storm that had driven him to such dominance. He knew better than to push Hannibal right now. Instead, he let himself sink into the comfort of Hannibal's touch, trusting that Hannibal would open up when he was ready.

"I guess we aren't sticking around for the third act?" Will's voice was still hoarse from their exertions. There was a lightness in his tone, an attempt to break the tension that still lingered in the air. Hannibal's response was a soft hum, his arms tightening around Will in a possessive embrace.

Their clothes were definitely ruined, and Will could feel the stickiness of sweat and other fluids against his skin. The bathroom was small, their combined body heat making the air feel thick and heavy. The faint scent of antiseptic cleaner mingled with the musk of their exertions, a reminder of where they were and what they had just done.

Hannibal finally murmured, his voice a low rumble that vibrated through Will's bones, "The third act should be well underway. We can slip out with hardly anyone noticing."

Will nodded, feeling the words more than hearing them. He could sense the undercurrent of tension in Hannibal's voice, the faint tremor that betrayed his usually unshakeable composure. There was something more beneath the surface, something that Hannibal wasn't saying. Will could feel it in the way Hannibal held him, the way his fingers lingered on his skin as if afraid to let go.

They straightened and cleaned up as best they could, their movements a little clumsy in the confined space. Will's body still hummed with the afterglow, his muscles trembling slightly from exhaustion and the lingering intensity of their encounter. Hannibal was a steady presence beside him, his hands gentle yet efficient as he helped Will smooth out his clothes

and straighten his hair. They exchanged a few quiet words, the intimacy of the moment wrapping around them like a warm blanket.

As they slipped out of the bathroom, Will couldn't help but glance around, half expecting to see someone standing there, watching. But as Hannibal had predicted, there were very few people left in the foyer. They stuck close to the edge of the room, moving with practiced ease towards the coat check. Will's body felt light, almost floaty, every step reminding him of how thoroughly he had been claimed. He walked a little slower than usual, his legs still unsteady, but Hannibal was right there, a grounding force at his side.

Hannibal was quieter than Will had expected, but his actions spoke volumes. His hand never left Will's back, guiding him with a firm, reassuring presence. There was a reserved quality to his movements, a silence that seemed to wrap around him like a cloak. But every touch was attentive, almost bordering on the possessive. Hannibal's fingers brushed against Will's neck, smoothing his collar, then lingered on his wrist, feeling his pulse as if to assure himself that Will was truly there.

At the coat check, Hannibal quietly collected their coats. Will watched the interaction, a small smile playing at the corners of his lips. If he had gone up to the coat check looking as disheveled as he did, there would have been comments, maybe even a few raised eyebrows. But Hannibal's command of presence was undeniable, and the valet handed over their coats without a word, the air of respect almost tangible.

Will slipped into his coat, the fabric settling around his shoulders like a comforting weight. Hannibal's hands were there, adjusting the coat, making sure it was wrapped snugly around Will. He glanced at Hannibal, seeing the tension still lingering in his eyes, the subtle clench of his jaw. There was something there, something unspoken, and Will's heart ached with the need to reach out, to offer reassurance.

"Take me home, Hannibal," Will said softly, his voice filled with a gentle insistence. Hannibal's eyes clouded with pain, a shadow crossing his face. For a brief moment, Will saw the raw vulnerability behind Hannibal's usually impenetrable facade. Hannibal opened his mouth to speak, but words seemed to fail him. Will realized with a jolt that Hannibal thought he wanted to be taken back to his house in Wolf Trap, a place that symbolized their separation.

The look of hurt in Hannibal's eyes cut through Will like a knife. It ached to see Hannibal think, even for a second, that he didn't want to be with him after everything they had done this evening. That he could think Will wanted to go back to Wolf Trap, to be apart, was almost unbearable.

"Not my house in Wolf Trap," Will said quickly, his voice gentle but firm, "home, Hannibal. With you."

Hannibal's expression sagged with tangible relief, his eyes briefly closing. His shoulders relaxed, and a deep breath escaped him as if a great weight had been lifted. Hannibal's eyes softened, the pain replaced by a profound sense of gratitude and–love. Because that was *love* Will felt radiating from Hannibal.

“Will,” Hannibal murmured, his voice thick with emotion. He pulled Will closer, his arms wrapping around him in a tender embrace. The contact was sweet and comforting, their bodies fitting together perfectly. Hannibal’s hand gently cupped the back of Will’s head, fingers threading through his hair as he pressed a soft kiss to Will’s temple.

Pulling back, Hannibal reached for Will’s hand, their fingers intertwining as they made their way out of the opera house. Every few steps, Hannibal’s fingers would trace small circles against Will’s, a gesture that kept Will tethered to the moment. As they stepped outside, the cool night air brushed against Will’s flushed skin, a welcome contrast to the heat still coursing through him. He squeezed Hannibal’s hand, a silent promise that they would face whatever came next together.

Chapter End Notes

so, what'd you think??? i had SO much fun writing this chapter and i hope it was just as fun to read :)

and before anyone comes for me, this is and will always be a dom Will fic, don't y'all worry!!

please please please drop a comment if you enjoyed, and you can also come find me on tumblr atgraciereadshannigram! y'all send me the sweetest comments, every single one makes me smile <3

Confessions

Chapter Notes

beta'd by EnmitiesSaddestGlare, any remaining mistakes are my own! love you babes <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal all but carried Will up to the door once they got home, his arms enveloping Will with a reassuring strength. There was an urgency in his steps, a subtle haste that telegraphed his need to ensure Will's well-being, to protect and care for him. Normally, Will would have protested being treated like a fragile doll, his independence flaring up in moments like this. But tonight, he understood Hannibal's unspoken need, recognizing the vulnerability masked by his haste.

Moments earlier, Hannibal had seemed ready to crawl into the passenger door and unbuckle Will's seatbelt. Will had simply placed a hand on Hannibal's forearm, stilling him with a soft murmur, "I've got it, baby." The endearment slipped out naturally, a gentle reassurance that he was capable of handling himself.

Hannibal had nodded, a brief flicker of something unnameable in his eyes, and they had proceeded. Now, as Hannibal reached to unlock the door, Will noticed the faintest tremor in his hand. The sight tugged at something deep within him, a blend of tenderness and concern. Leaning in, Will pressed a gentle kiss to Hannibal's jaw, his lips brushing against the strong line with a softness that spoke volumes.

Inside, the house was dimly lit, welcoming, and warm, a sanctuary that wrapped around them like a comforting embrace. The lamps cast a gentle light, highlighting the familiar contours of Hannibal's home and creating a sense of calm and security. Will stood still, allowing Hannibal to remove his coat and hang it up in the closet with meticulous care.

Hannibal gestured for Will to sit on the bench by the door. Will complied, feeling a strange mixture of contentment and curiosity. As he settled, Hannibal dropped to a crouch, his elegant hands moving to untie Will's shoes. Will watched, his mind still too blissed out to overanalyze, simply absorbing the gentle care in Hannibal's actions.

Hannibal's fingers worked deftly, removing Will's shoes with the same precision he brought to everything he did. Will felt a profound sense of gratitude and affection wash over him, his body relaxing further into the moment. Hannibal's touch was gentle but firm, each movement purposeful and filled with the promise of care and protection.

Once Will's shoes were off, Hannibal didn't immediately rise. Instead, he leaned in, grasping Will's hands in his own. The contact was warm and centering, a silent reassurance that Will

wasn't alone. Hannibal's breath was warm against Will's neck as he spoke, his voice barely above a whisper, "Are you terribly sore, darling?"

The question was so filled with concern and affection that it sent a shiver down Will's spine. He felt the sincerity in Hannibal's words, the underlying fear that he might have caused Will discomfort. Will wrapped his arms around Hannibal in a reassuring embrace, his touch gentle and affirming. "No, but I could use a snack," he replied softly, trying to inject a bit of normalcy into the situation.

Hannibal gave him a small, somewhat strained smile, his eyes still betraying an emotion that Will struggled to identify. Was it regret? Fear? The ambiguity in Hannibal's gaze sent a pang through Will's chest, but he chose not to press, knowing that Hannibal would reveal his thoughts in due time. For now, he just wanted to be close to him.

"Why don't you go shower off while I make some food for us to eat?" Hannibal suggested, his voice soft but insistent.

The suggestion hit Will like a splash of cold water. The thought of separating, even for a moment, felt unbearable. An urgent desire to remain close to Hannibal surged within him, a desperate need to maintain the warmth and reassurance of his presence. He shook his head almost immediately, his voice trembling slightly as he replied, "I want to stay close to you if that's okay," he replied, his voice steady but laced with a vulnerability that mirrored Hannibal's own hidden emotions.

A flicker of understanding passed through Hannibal's eyes, and he nodded, the tension in his shoulders easing slightly. "Of course, Will." He paused, seeming to consider something before adding, "Let's at least go change into something more comfortable, darling."

Will agreed, a hint of amusement in his eyes as he remembered their impromptu clean-up session. The opera bathrooms had indeed been well stocked–fluffy towels, wet wipes, breath mints–a display of the venue's opulence and attention to detail. Even in that hurried, passionate moment, they had managed to regain a semblance of decorum.

As Will made to stand up, he found his legs still unsteady, wobbling slightly under the strain of their recent exertions. Before he could fully regain his balance, he felt himself being lifted off the ground. Hannibal had scooped him up effortlessly, cradling him in his arms as if Will weighed nothing. One arm was under Will's knees and the other supported his back, keeping him close against his chest.

Will blinked in surprise, his heart skipping a beat at the unexpected gesture. He took a moment to appreciate the sheer strength in Hannibal's arms, the way his muscles tensed and flexed beneath his touch. In Hannibal's embrace, Will felt a surprising sense of vulnerability and solace. The firm grip around his back and beneath his knees provided an unexpected feeling of being profoundly cared for.

"Is this really necessary?" Will asked, arching a brow, his tone light and teasing despite the situation. There was no heat in his question, just a gentle ribbing. Whatever Hannibal needed, Will would willingly give.

Hannibal's eyes softened at the query, his expression becoming almost shy. He just nodded, his gaze locked onto Will's, filled with an emotion that made Will's breath catch. "Indulge me, Will," Hannibal murmured, his voice gentle yet still carrying an undercurrent of something deeper. It was difficult to decipher, but it was there, a silent plea for understanding and acceptance.

Will chuckled softly, the sound vibrating through the small space between them. "Well, if it makes you feel better," he said, his tone light, "I suppose I can tolerate being carried around like a damsel in distress."

Hannibal's smile widened a small amount. "You, my dear Will, are far from a damsel in distress. But I do appreciate your cooperation."

As Will felt a tender sense of being anchored by a deep, silent understanding, he rested his head against Hannibal's shoulder, his arms wrapping around his neck. Hannibal moved with his usual grace, the steady thrum of his heartbeat against Will's body creating a soothing rhythm.

They entered the bedroom, a sanctuary of dark wood and rich fabrics, and then continued into the walk-in closet. Hannibal set Will down gently, one arm still wrapped around his waist to ensure he was steady. With his other hand, Hannibal lightly grasped Will's shoulder, his touch firm yet reassuring. He waited, watching Will's balance and posture, ensuring that he was securely on his own two feet before gradually stepping back. The closet was dimly lit, the muted lighting still casting shadows that danced across the rich fabrics and meticulously organized shelves.

Will's overnight bag was completely forgotten as Hannibal began to undress him, his movements slow and reverent. Hannibal's fingers deftly unbuttoned Will's shirt, the fabric slipping off his shoulders and pooling at his feet. Will closed his eyes, letting the sensation of hands on his skin wash over him, the cool air a sharp contrast to the warmth of his touch.

Hannibal continued, removing the rest of Will's clothing with the same careful precision. Once Will was completely undressed, Hannibal selected a pair of incredibly soft, likely designer, flannel pajama pants and a black shirt of his own that was just a little too big for Will. The shirt enveloped Will in Hannibal's scent, and he breathed deeply letting it soothe and comfort him.

As Hannibal dressed him, his fingers brushed against Will's skin with feather-light touches, each one sending a shiver down Will's spine. The tactile sensation was grounding, connecting him to the present moment. His touch lingered on Will's shoulders, smoothing the fabric of the oversized shirt, ensuring it fit comfortably.

The more Will allowed Hannibal to care for him, the more he noticed Hannibal calming down. The tension in Hannibal's shoulders gradually eased, his movements becoming less hurried and more fluid. The act of dressing Will, of ensuring his comfort, seemed to soothe something deep within Hannibal.

Only once Will was fully dressed did Hannibal turn his attention to himself. He quickly undressed, his tuxedo joining Will's clothes on the floor, and slipped into silk pajama pants

and a soft white t-shirt. Even in simple loungewear, Hannibal managed to look regal.

As soon as Hannibal was done, Will instinctively moved back into his embrace, and Hannibal's arms encircled him without hesitation, drawing him close. He could feel the steady rise and fall of Hannibal's chest, each breath a calming rhythm that eased him into a deeper sense of peace. Hannibal's caresses traveled up and down Will's back in soothing strokes, tracing patterns that spoke of both reassurance and possessive care.

Nuzzling into Hannibal's neck, Will murmured, "Snack?"

Hannibal exhaled a sound that could almost, if Will strained his ear, be mistaken for a chuckle. The sound was reassuring, regardless, a sign that Hannibal was beginning to relax. "You're not going to carry me all the way back down, are you?" Will asked with a grin. Hannibal smiled fondly at him, the corners of his eyes crinkling with warmth. He gestured in a "lead the way" manner, allowing Will to guide them out of the closet. As they made their way downstairs, Hannibal's hand remained a constant presence on Will's lower back, steadying him.

As they reached the bottom of the stairs, Will paused for a moment, feeling the residual warmth of Hannibal's embrace lingering on his skin. He glanced back at Hannibal, who met his gaze with a soft, reassuring smile. Feeling a sense of calm wash over him, Will led them to the study. The cozy room invited them in with its warm lighting and familiar scents. Hannibal, ever attentive, retrieved a thick, cozy blanket from a nearby chair. He carefully unfolded it, the fabric soft and comforting to the touch. With gentle movements, Hannibal wrapped the blanket around Will, tucking it securely around his shoulders and legs.

Will briefly considered protesting, a remark on the tip of his tongue, but the tender expression on Hannibal's face stopped him. There was a softness in Hannibal's eyes, a depth of emotion and Will felt his heart swell with affection, understanding the unspoken message behind Hannibal's actions.

"I can go prepare that snack if you're comfortable waiting here," Hannibal murmured, his voice filled with gentle concern. "I won't be more than ten minutes."

Will nodded, his gaze lingering on Hannibal. 'I'll be right here,' he replied softly, his words carrying an unspoken promise of his own. The sound of Hannibal's footsteps receded, leaving Will alone in the quiet study. He toyed with the idea of getting up and starting the fire himself–it would only take a moment or two–but something held him back. He knew that Hannibal needed to care for him, to ensure his comfort and well-being, and Will found himself endeared by it.

As Will sank deeper into the comfort of the blanket, his mind began to replay the events of the evening like a slideshow, each memory vivid and charged with emotion. The night had begun with such elegance and sophistication. He recalled Margot's presence, her composed demeanor, and the way she had seamlessly fit into their evening. The private box at the opera had been a sanctuary, a place where he and Hannibal could be seen together, yet isolated from the world. The memory of Hannibal's hand resting possessively on his back, guiding him, sent a pleasant shiver down Will's spine.

His breath caught as he recalled the way Hannibal had dragged him to the bathroom, the forceful yet controlled movements that spoke of an underlying desperation. Hannibal's mask had dropped entirely, revealing the beast within, and Will had found himself on the receiving end of that ferocious possessiveness. He could still feel the bruising intensity of the grip on his shoulders, the heated kiss that had stolen his breath away. The transition from the composed, genteel Hannibal to the raw, unfiltered beast had been startling yet exhilarating. Will had felt the power in Hannibal's grip, the sheer force of his need to claim him.

A part of him idly wondered if they would end up killing the man at the bar. The thought didn't shock him; instead, it felt almost natural. The use of "we" instead of "Hannibal" was telling. They were a unit, bound together by their dark desires and mutual understanding. Will's thoughts were tinged with a sense of inevitability, as if this path they were on was the only one that made sense.

He knew that something buried deep within Hannibal had been triggered to let his beast out like that. The primal need for control, the fear of losing what he held dear–it had all come to the surface in that moment. Will could sense it, the underlying currents of fear and desperation that had driven Hannibal to such lengths. But amidst the roughness and intensity, there had been a profound tenderness, a need to protect and cherish.

Will's thoughts were abruptly interrupted by the sound of footsteps approaching. He looked up to see Hannibal entering the room, carrying a silver serving tray laden with an assortment of snacks. There was a pitcher of water, sliced cheese, crackers, some fruit, and– *is that hot chocolate?* Will couldn't help but marvel at how Hannibal had managed to put all of this together in just ten minutes.

Hannibal set the tray down on the low table with practiced ease, every movement measured and precise. Will watched him intently, taking in the way Hannibal's fingers arranged the items on the tray. There was a fluid grace to his actions, a controlled elegance that spoke of years of refined practice. The scent of hot chocolate wafted up, mingling with the faint aroma of the firewood stacked nearby, creating a comforting ambiance.

Once the tray was arranged to his satisfaction, Hannibal moved over to the fireplace. Will's eyes followed him, tracing the lines of his form as he bent to start the fire. Hannibal's every motion was careful and considered. He knelt by the hearth, his silk pajama pants stretching over the muscles of his thighs, his white t-shirt clinging to the contours of his back and shoulders. There was an inherent strength in the way he moved, a powerful grace that was captivating to watch.

Will admired the way Hannibal's arms flexed, each movement precise as he carefully stacked the logs. His hands, usually so adept with a scalpel, moved with equal finesse when handling the firewood. He struck a match, the flame flaring to life with a bright burst of light. Hannibal's face was illuminated for a brief moment, his features cast in sharp relief against the darkness of the room.

The fire caught, small flames licking up the logs and beginning to spread. Hannibal leaned in closer, his breath causing the embers to burn brighter. Will watched, entranced by the play of light and shadow across Hannibal's face. The flickering flames reflected in his eyes, adding a warmth to his gaze that seemed to reach out and touch Will's very soul.

Hannibal turned back to Will, a small, tender smile playing on his lips. The firelight danced in his eyes as he approached the couch, and sat down beside Will, their bodies naturally gravitating towards one another. Hannibal pulled Will closer, his arms wrapping around him in a protective embrace. He arranged the blanket over their laps, ensuring Will was snug and warm. The touch of Hannibal's hands was a constant presence; his fingers traced soothing patterns on Will's arm, the contact gentle yet firm. It was as if Hannibal was silently reassuring him that he was here, that he was safe.

"How are you feeling now, darling?" Hannibal's voice was a soft murmur, his breath warm against Will's skin.

Will turned his head slightly, meeting Hannibal's gaze. The warmth in Hannibal's eyes was like a balm to his soul, easing the remnants of tension from their intense evening. "This is perfect, Hannibal, thank you," Will replied, his voice filled with genuine appreciation.

Hannibal's smile widened, and he pressed a gentle kiss to Will's temple before turning his attention to the tray of food. They began to share the meal, their movements synchronized and intimate. Hannibal's attentiveness was evident in every gesture, from the way he carefully selected the best pieces of fruit to the way he made sure Will's cup of hot chocolate was always within reach. The hot chocolate was a revelation, its rich, velvety warmth spreading through Will's chest with each sip. He hadn't realized how much he needed it until the first taste hit his tongue, the comforting flavor soothing him from the inside out.

As they fed each other, the intimacy of the act was striking. Hannibal would hold a piece of cheese or a cracker to Will's lips, his eyes never leaving Will's face as he savored each bite. In return, Will would do the same, delighting in the small smiles that would grace Hannibal's lips with each offering.

When Will pushed away the tray, signaling he was full, Hannibal immediately took the cue. He settled deeper into the couch, positioning himself with his back against the armrest before pulling Will closer, their bodies fitting together naturally as if they were made to be intertwined in this way. Will found himself chest to chest with Hannibal, their legs tangled together in a comfortable, intimate sprawl.

The rhythmic thump of Hannibal's heartbeat filled Will's ears. He felt Hannibal's breaths, slow and even, against his own chest, the gentle rise and fall a comforting presence. Will closed his eyes for a moment, allowing himself to fully sink into the sensation of being held so securely. Hannibal's hand traced soothing patterns on Will's back, each touch deliberate and tender. Will responded by nuzzling into Hannibal's neck, his lips brushing against the skin in a feather-light kiss.

Will's mind relaxed, but the intensity of their encounter at the opera still lingered. He wondered if Hannibal would start a conversation about what had transpired, or if he would need to gently prompt him. Despite the comfort of their current position, Will could sense an undercurrent of unresolved tension, a feeling that there were still things left unsaid.

Before Will could decide whether to break the silence or simply enjoy the closeness, a deep inhale and subsequent sigh caught his attention. Hannibal's exhale was heavy with hidden

emotions, and then his lips found Will's curls. "I wasn't sure you'd want to stay," he confessed, his voice barely above a whisper, breath hitching as a sob caught in his throat.

The words hit Will with a force that made him want to immediately refute them, to demand why Hannibal would ever think he wouldn't stay. But he forced himself to remain calm, sensing that this moment was too delicate for an impulsive reaction. He could feel the anxiety and fear radiating from Hannibal, as if some protective shield had been dropped. Will recognized that Hannibal was making a concerted effort to let him in, to share a vulnerability that he rarely exposed.

Will shifted slightly, moving to position himself so he could see Hannibal's eyes more clearly. He nestled into the space between Hannibal's side and the back of the couch, their legs still intertwined. The firelight cast a warm glow over Hannibal's features, highlighting the subtle tension in his jaw and the uncertainty in his eyes.

"Where else would I go?" Will asked softly, his voice blending confusion with reassurance. His eyes searched Hannibal's, looking for the source of his doubt. He remembered the first time they had been together, the vulnerability in Hannibal's voice as he had asked Will to stay with him. "I'm not going anywhere, darlin'."

Hannibal's gaze met Will's, and he could swear he saw the sheen of tears fill Hannibal's eyes before he closed them tightly, inhaling sharply through his nostrils. The sight tugged at Will's heart, and without hesitation, he squeezed Hannibal, his arms wrapping around him with reassurance. Hannibal responded by letting out a shaky breath as Will leaned in, pressing soft kisses to his cheek, jaw, and the corner of his mouth, each touch filled with a silent promise of understanding and acceptance.

"What transpired in the bathroom was… unbecoming of me." Hannibal's voice faltered, his eyes squeezed shut as if shielding himself from Will's potential judgment. His body tensed, each muscle rigid under Will's touch. Will could feel Hannibal's breathing pick up, each inhale sharp and shallow, betraying the inner turmoil he was struggling to contain. "I knew you did not want that from me, but the knowledge wasn't enough to stop–"

"Hannibal," he interrupted softly, yet firmly, shifting their positions once more until he was holding himself over Hannibal. He placed a hand on Hannibal's cheek, his thumb gently stroking the fine lines etched there. "Baby, look at me." His voice held a commanding tenderness, a blend of strength and reassurance.

Hannibal hesitated, but the insistence in Will's tone left no room for avoidance. Slowly, he opened his eyes, and Will was struck by the full depth of emotion laid bare. "There you are," Will murmured, his voice a soft exhale of relief. "You think I didn't want that? That I wasn't enjoying myself?"

As he spoke, Will's fingers threaded through Hannibal's hair, the strands silky and cool to the touch. He marveled at the way Hannibal subtly arched into the caress, a silent plea for more contact. Will's movements were steady, each stroke of his fingers an affirmation of his desire and reassurance.

Hannibal's eyes, though still glistening with unshed tears, began to relax. The tension in his body ebbed slightly under Will's touch. The sight tugged at something deep within Will, a fierce protectiveness and an overwhelming need to comfort and claim this man who had become so integral to his life.

Hannibal's voice, strained and filled with self-reproach, broke the silence. "You set the terms that night we had dinner here and discussed…" His voice trailed off, a helpless look in his eyes as if he were begging Will to understand without him having to say the words. "Will, you made it clear that being in control was the only way forward for us. And I violated that without any kind of prior discussion."

Will could see the turmoil in Hannibal's eyes, the quiet plea for forgiveness and understanding. He took a deep breath, letting the weight of Hannibal's words settle between them. "Hannibal," he began, his voice steady and commanding, "I need you to understand something." He paused, watching as Hannibal's eyes locked onto his, the swirling emotions gradually giving way to focus and clarity. His breathing slowed, each inhale and exhale measured and deliberate. The slight furrow of his brow relaxed, and his hands, which had been gripping Will's shoulders, softened their hold, resting more gently against him.

"What you did was not a violation," Will stated firmly. He leaned down, his lips brushing against Hannibal's forehead, feeling the slight shiver that ran through Hannibal's body at the contact. "It was what you needed. What we *both* needed," he murmured against Hannibal's skin, his breath hot and tantalizing. "And I will *always* give you what you need."

The realization of how much he wanted to care for Hannibal, to take control and provide what Hannibal craved, filled Will with a sense of purpose and arousal that was almost overwhelming. The intensity of his desire to be the one who understood and met Hannibal's needs amazed him. It was a responsibility he embraced with unexpected fervor, a fierce protectiveness that felt as natural as breathing.

Will cupped Hannibal's face in his hands. "I understand," he said softly. Hannibal's grip on Will tightened, his eyes searching Will's face for any sign of doubt.

"It was more than just possessiveness," Hannibal admitted, his voice faltering. He took a deep breath, his usual eloquence escaping him. "It was fear. Fear of losing you, fear of not being enough. I needed to reassert control, to remind myself that you are mine."

Will could feel the desperation in Hannibal's grip, the way his fingers dug into his skin, as if he could keep from losing Will through sheer force. The confession was a struggle, each word weighed down by years of meticulously maintained control and the terror of exposing his deepest insecurities.

Will knew that Hannibal needed him to take back control, to guide the rest of this conversation and encounter. The realization that Hannibal trusted him enough to show this side of himself was both humbling and empowering. Will felt the weight of that trust settle into his bones, anchoring him in a way he hadn't anticipated. He understood, on a deeply intuitive level, what Hannibal needed from him at this moment—reassurance, strength, and the unwavering presence of someone who saw all of him and still chose to stay.

Hannibal's vulnerability was a rare and precious gift, one that Will was determined to honor. He wanted to show Hannibal just how well he could take care of him, to prove that they were unbreakable and that his commitment was unwavering. A surge of protective instinct combined with a deep, unyielding desire to affirm their connection washed over Will. He recognized that Hannibal, who had always been the one in control, needed to feel secure in his surrender. Hannibal needed to know he could let go without fear, that Will would be there to catch him, hold him, and stay with him without reservation.

Will's resolve strengthened as he felt Hannibal's slight tremors, the tension that still lingered in his muscles. He knew that his next words, his next actions, would either solidify Hannibal's trust or break it. Will's heart swelled with a fierce, protective instinct, and he leaned in closer, his voice soothing. "Hannibal," he whispered, his breath warm against Hannibal's ear, "I've got you. I'm here. I will always be here."

Will's hands moved over Hannibal's body with intentional care, and each caress was a promise, a vow of commitment. Will's mouth traced the pulse point on Hannibal's neck, the rapid heartbeat beneath his lips electrifying him. He let his fingers trail slowly, tracing Hannibal's jaw, moving down the column of his neck, and over the expanse of his chest, teasing the sensitive skin beneath his fingertips.

Hannibal's breath hitched, his body reacting instinctively to Will's touch. Each caress was a blend of tenderness and command, reinforcing the promise Will had made. Hannibal's walls, carefully constructed and fiercely maintained, crumbled completely under Will's ministrations. Will could feel the shift, the way Hannibal's body relaxed and yielded to him, trusting and needing his guidance.

"You were beautiful… claiming me the same way I've claimed you." Will's hand stroked across Hannibal's belly, tracing the lines of muscle and the curve of his ribs through the thin shirt. He pressed a kiss to Hannibal's sternum, feeling the rapid rise and fall of his chest. "Showing me that I belong to you, just as much as you belong to me," Will murmured, his voice a low, steady hum against Hannibal's stomach. He felt Hannibal's response immediately–a soft, broken sound, somewhere between a whimper and a whine. Hannibal's eyes fluttered closed, his teeth digging into his bottom lip in a desperate attempt to maintain some semblance of control.

Will held back a groan of his own as arousal pooled in his belly, the sight and sound of Hannibal's vulnerability intensifying his own desire. Hannibal's teeth sinking into the soft flesh of his lips was a distracting, maddeningly erotic sight, but Will forced himself to stay focused. This moment was about Hannibal and what he needed.

"You showed me a part of you that you rarely let anyone else see," Will continued, his fingers now brushing tenderly along Hannibal's jawline. "That's not something to be ashamed of."

Hannibal's breath caught, a couple of tears slipping down his cheeks at the admission. The sight of Hannibal's tears broke something inside Will, a deep ache that resonated in his chest. Seeing Hannibal so exposed, so raw, touched him in a way he hadn't anticipated.

"What do you need right now, sweetheart?" Will asked, his voice soft but insistent.

Hannibal looked like he was about to break, his eyes shimmering with unshed tears. He managed to whisper brokenly, “You, Will.”

The vulnerability in Hannibal’s expression, in his voice, was almost too much to bear. It sent a jolt of desire through Will, his cock twitching and hardening further at the raw need in Hannibal’s plea. His heart clenched with emotion, the depth of his feelings for Hannibal crashing over him like a tidal wave.

“I’m right here, baby,” Will assured, his voice thick with emotion. “Show me.”

With a gentle but firm touch, Will maneuvered them so that Hannibal was straddling his lap, knees on either side of Will’s thighs. As Hannibal settled into the new position, his hands instinctively found Will’s shoulders, fingers digging in for balance. Their groins pressed together, the friction sending a shockwave of pleasure through them both. A deep, mutual groan resonated between them, vibrating through their chests and intensifying the charged atmosphere.

Their eyes locked as Will’s hands roamed over Hannibal’s back, fingers tracing the contours of his spine, feeling the warmth and the slight tremors of anticipation. Hannibal’s own hands began to move, sliding down Will’s chest, his touch both exploratory and possessive.

“Show me, Hannibal, show me what you need,” Will whispered, his voice rough with desire. He brought one hand to Hannibal’s neck, his thumb brushing lightly over the pulse point, feeling the rapid beat of Hannibal’s heart. Hannibal’s breath hitched at the touch, his eyes darkening with need and determination.

Hannibal didn’t need any further encouragement. He lunged forward, capturing Will’s lips in a kiss that was nothing short of scorching. Their mouths collided with a raw, desperate hunger, tongues immediately intertwining in a fervent dance. Will’s hands gripped Hannibal’s hips, pulling him even closer, their bodies pressing together with a desperate need for friction.

The kiss deepened, becoming more frantic, more urgent. Hannibal’s fingers threaded through Will’s hair, tugging hard enough to elicit a low, pleasured growl from deep in Will’s throat. He angled his head to deepen the kiss, their breaths mingling, hot and ragged, as they devoured each other with an intensity that bordered on feral. Will’s tongue traced the seam of Hannibal’s lips before plunging inside, savoring the taste of him.

Hannibal responded with equal fervor, his hips beginning to grind against Will’s in a steady rhythm. The friction was maddening, a tantalizing preview of what was to come. Will’s hands slid down to cup Hannibal’s ass, feeling the firm muscles flex and tense under his touch. He squeezed, guiding Hannibal’s movements, urging him to move faster, to take what he needed.

Their bodies moved in sync, each grind sending jolts of pleasure through them. The thin barrier of their pajama pants only heightened the sensation, the rough fabric rubbing deliciously against their aching erections. Hannibal’s moans were swallowed by Will’s mouth, their kiss growing even more desperate, more consuming. Will’s hands roamed over Hannibal’s ass, fingers slipping beneath the waistband to grasp bare flesh, pulling him even closer, driving the friction to an almost unbearable level.

Hannibal broke the kiss, panting heavily, his lips red and swollen. He buried his face in Will's neck, nipping and sucking at the sensitive skin there, leaving a trail of marks that would bloom into bruises. Will's hands continued their relentless exploration, one slipping between them to cup Hannibal's erection through his pants, rubbing and squeezing in time with the grinding of their hips.

Will's mouth found Hannibal's neck, kissing and biting the sensitive skin, eliciting even more desperate sounds from Hannibal. He felt Hannibal's pulse quicken under his lips, the rapid thrum of his heartbeat a mirror of his own racing heart. His hands roamed over Hannibal's back, pulling him impossibly closer, needing to feel every inch of him.

The world narrowed down to just the two of them, lost in the sensations they were creating. The room was filled with the sound of their labored breathing, the soft creak of the couch, and the wet, needy sounds of their kisses. Every touch, every movement was a promise, a declaration of their mutual need and desire.

Will could sense that Hannibal needed more encouragement, a gentle nudge to fully embrace the moment. Leaning in, he pressed his mouth against the curve of Hannibal's neck, his breath hot and teasing. "Do you need my cock, baby?" he whispered, his voice thick with desire.

Hannibal's response was immediate and frantic, a series of little moans escaping his throat as he continued to grind against Will, their erections pressing together through the fabric of their underwear. The friction was maddening, a delicious torment that left them both on edge.

"It's right there, baby, take what you need," Will murmured, his lips brushing against Hannibal's ear. He could feel Hannibal's hesitation, the uncertainty that lingered just beneath the surface. Will reached down, guiding one of Hannibal's hands to his crotch, pressing his throbbing hardness into Hannibal's palm. "That's it, darlin', take it out."

Hannibal's fingers trembled as he complied, his touch both eager and unsure. Will lifted his hips, making it easier for Hannibal to pull the flannel down, exposing his throbbing erection. The sensation of the cool air against his heated skin was a delicious contrast. Hannibal licked his lips, an animal hunger lighting up his eyes as he wrapped his fingers around the thick shaft.

Hannibal's breath hitched, and a desperate, almost pleading expression crossed his face as a faint, stuttering whisper escaped him, "I–I need…"

Will silenced him with a tender yet commanding touch, his hands cupping Hannibal's face. He brushed his thumb over Hannibal's trembling lips, feeling the warmth and the slight moisture of his breath. "Pants off, darlin'," he instructed, his tone brooking no argument.

Hannibal fumbled for a moment, driven by both eagerness and the intensity of their shared desire. He pushed himself off Will just enough to allow him to reach the waistband of his pants. With a swift, almost frantic motion, he peeled them down, his cock springing free, glistening with pre-come.

The sight was mesmerizing, Hannibal's thick length twitching with arousal, the head flushed a deep, needy red. Will quickly tugged off his own remaining clothing, as Hannibal mirrored his actions, pulling his own shirt over his head and discarding it with haste. Hannibal's knees found their place again on either side of Will's thighs, his hands resting on Will's shoulders, steadying himself as he lined up their bodies.

The heat of Hannibal's body was intoxicating. Bare skin on bare skin created a delicious friction as their erections rubbed together, eliciting mutual groans of pleasure. Will's hands roamed over Hannibal's back, feeling the taut muscles ripple and flex under his fingertips. Every shiver and tremor that ran through Hannibal pulled him closer until there was no space left between them.

Their lips met in a searing kiss, a desperate clash of tongues and teeth that left them both breathless. Hannibal's touch was everywhere, exploring Will's chest with eager fingers, tracing the lines of his shoulders and neck. His caresses were both reverent and hungry, as if committing every inch of Will to memory. Fingers slid over sweat-slicked skin, pausing to tease a nipple, drawing a sharp intake of breath from Will. Hannibal's lips left a trail of heat as they moved from Will's mouth to his jaw, then down to his throat, sucking and biting at the sensitive skin.

"How do you want my cock?" Will asked, his voice low and filled with a knowing edge. He already knew the answer, but he wanted to hear Hannibal say it, to feel the power of his need in his words.

Hannibal's breath hitched, his eyes darkening with desire. "Will… in me, please," he whispered, his voice a raw, desperate plea.

Will's hands moved with purpose, each touch filled with intent. He wrapped his arms around Hannibal, his fingers trailing down the curve of his spine until they found their destination. As he reached Hannibal's entrance, the remnants of lube made his touch smooth and easy. He slid a finger inside, the heat and tightness enveloping him immediately. He felt Hannibal's body clench around him, then relax, hips pushing back instinctively, seeking more.

Hannibal's response was immediate, his hips arching back, silently begging for deeper contact. Will's finger moved with practiced ease, exploring the tight channel, the slick heat surrounding him. He added another finger, stretching and scissoring, preparing Hannibal for what was to come. The way Hannibal's body opened up for him, the soft gasps and moans that escaped his lips, drove Will wild with desire.

The intimacy of the moment, the trust implicit in Hannibal's surrender, was almost overwhelming. Will leaned in, pressing soft kisses to Hannibal's shoulder, feeling the shiver of excitement that ran through him. Will withdrew his fingers slowly, savoring the way Hannibal's body resisted, then relented. He slicked up his cock with the remnants of the lube, positioning himself at Hannibal's entrance. "I'm right here, baby," he murmured, his voice a mix of tenderness and command. "Take what you need."

Hannibal let out a desperate little gasp, his breath catching in his throat as he wrapped his fingers around Will's cock. The warmth and firmness of Hannibal's grip sent a jolt of raw pleasure through Will's body, making his hips buck involuntarily. Hannibal's eyes, dark and

intense, locked onto Will's as he positioned himself, the swollen tip of Will's cock pressing against his slick entrance.

With deliberate slowness, Hannibal began to slide down, the initial resistance giving way to a delicious stretch. Will's breath hitched, his hands gripping Hannibal's hips tightly, guiding him, urging him to take more. The sensation was overwhelming, the tight, wet heat of Hannibal's body enveloping him inch by agonizing inch.

Hannibal's moan, a deep, throaty sound of pure pleasure, filled the room. The sound reverberated through Will, sending a surge of heat straight to his core. His breath hitched, and his fingers dug into Hannibal's hips, guiding him down with a possessive grip. "That's my good boy," Will murmured, his voice thick with arousal and affection. "Showing me what he needs."

As Hannibal settled fully onto Will's lap, the head of Will's cock pressing deep inside him, both men paused, their breaths mingling in the scant space between them. The sensation of being so completely joined, of Hannibal's tight heat enveloping him, was almost overwhelming. Will could feel every quiver, every pulse of Hannibal's body, and it drove him wild with need.

Hannibal's eyes fluttered open, locking onto Will's with a look of raw, unfiltered need that took Will's breath away. The intensity of Hannibal's gaze, the way it bore into him with such naked vulnerability and power, made Will's heart clench with emotion. He remembered the love he felt radiating off Hannibal as they left the opera earlier, but now, in this moment, that love seemed to be multiplied tenfold, a fierce and unyielding force that enveloped them both.

Will felt his own emotions surge, the sheer weight of Hannibal's need and desire filling him with a profound sense of purpose and devotion. This was more than just physical desire; it was a merging of their souls.

Hannibal began to move, his hips lifting and lowering in a slow rhythm that was designed to unravel Will completely. The friction was exquisite, each slide of Hannibal's tight, slick heat up and down Will's cock a perfect, torturous blend of pleasure and need. Every movement sent waves of intense sensation radiating through Will's body, drawing raw, desperate groans from his lips.

Will's hands roamed hungrily over Hannibal's body, feeling the play of muscles under his skin, the way he moved with a grace and power that was uniquely his. He could feel Hannibal's thighs trembling with effort, the strain in his calves as he lifted and lowered himself. The sight and feel of Hannibal above him, taking him in over and over again, was almost too much to bear.

"You feel so good, Hannibal," Will breathed, his voice low and reverent, thick with arousal. "So perfect."

Hannibal's response was a series of breathless moans, his movements becoming more fluid, more confident. He rode Will with focused intensity, their gazes locked in a wordless communication that spoke of desperate need and overwhelming desire. Hannibal's pace

quickened, his hips slamming down harder, faster, driving Will deeper inside him with every thrust.

Will's hands gripped Hannibal's hips more firmly, guiding his movements, encouraging him to take what he needed. "That's it, baby," he murmured, his voice rough with need. "Ride me. Take what you need."

Hannibal's eyes fluttered closed for a moment, a deep, throaty moan escaping his lips. His hands roamed over Will's chest, fingers teasing his nipples, drawing sharp, pleasured gasps from Will. "Will," he panted, his voice trembling with need. "More. Please."

Will's response was a low growl. He shifted his hips, angling himself to hit that perfect spot inside Hannibal with each thrust. The reaction was beautiful—Hannibal's body tensed, a high, keening moan ripping from his throat as he ground down harder, seeking that sweet, overwhelming pleasure.

Hannibal's rhythm began to falter, his movements growing more erratic as desperation took hold. Each thrust became a little less controlled, a little more frantic. The slick heat of their bodies, the way they moved together, created a maddening friction that drove Hannibal closer to the edge. His eyes shut, head falling back, lips parted as he gasped for breath.

"Do you need even more, baby?" Will asked, his voice a deep, rough whisper filled with both tenderness and command. A frantic nod accompanied by a desperate moan was answer enough. Hannibal's hands clutched at Will's shoulders, fingers digging in as if to anchor himself.

"Tell me," Will urged, his hands roaming over Hannibal's sweat-slicked back, feeling the muscles ripple and tense beneath his touch. He loved the way Hannibal's body responded to him, the way every touch elicited a fresh wave of shivers and gasps. He loved Hannibal.

"Y-your… your hand, Will," Hannibal gasped out, his voice trembling with raw need. His eyes opened briefly, locking onto Will's, the plea in them unmistakable.

"Anything you need, darlin'," Will breathed, his heart swelling with the desire to show Hannibal how he could take care of him. He moved one hand down to Hannibal's erection, wrapping his fingers around the rigid length; Hannibal's body jerked, a choked moan escaping his lips as Will began to tug on his cock with slow, firm strokes.

The sensation of Hannibal's hardness in his hand, the silky smooth skin and the way it pulsed with every beat of his heart, sent a thrill of arousal through Will. He tightened his grip slightly, his thumb brushing over the sensitive head, spreading the bead of pre-come that had gathered there. Hannibal's response was a series of broken moans, his hips bucking into Will's hand, seeking more.

Will's other hand was firm on Hannibal's hip, guiding his movements with a steady, unrelenting rhythm. He could feel the tight heat of Hannibal's body gripping him, the way Hannibal's inner muscles clenched and released around his cock. The combination of Hannibal riding him with desperate intensity and the eager thrusts into his hand was nearly overwhelming.

“Does that feel good, baby?” Will asked, his voice low and breathless. He leaned in, his lips brushing against Hannibal’s ear, his hot breath sending shivers down Hannibal’s spine. “Do you like it when I touch you like this?”

Hannibal’s moans grew louder, his hips moving with increasing urgency. “Yes, Will, yes,” he gasped, his voice trembling with need. “So good… please, don’t stop.”

Will’s hand moved faster, stroking Hannibal’s cock with firm, sure strokes. His thumb teased the sensitive slit, spreading more pre-come and making Hannibal shudder with every touch. The slick, wet sounds of his hand working Hannibal’s cock mingled with the rhythmic creak of the couch and the wet, slapping sounds of their bodies coming together.

“You’re so beautiful, Hannibal,” Will murmured, his voice thick with emotion. “So perfect. My good boy.” He was completely overcome by how beautiful Hannibal looked in this moment, the way his eyes shone as he rode Will harder. As Hannibal moved, their shared history flashed through Will’s mind–the betrayals, the pain, the longing, and finally, the acceptance. The way Hannibal moved, the way he claimed Will with each thrust, was a revelation, a testament to the depth of his feelings. All the walls they had built around themselves were crumbling, leaving nothing but raw, unfiltered emotion in their wake.

The sight of Hannibal above him, taking what he needed, showing Will exactly how he felt, sent a profound rush of emotion through Will. He felt a powerful, almost overwhelming love bubbling up in his chest, filling every corner of his being. The intensity of this emotion, and the way their bodies moved in perfect harmony, was almost too much to bear. Will’s breath hitched, his heart pounding as the realization hit him with full force–he was hopelessly, irrevocably in love with Hannibal Lecter.

He could see it in Hannibal’s eyes too, the same depth of emotion, the same unspoken words hanging between them. It was in the way Hannibal’s gaze softened as he looked down at Will, the way his hands trembled slightly as they caressed Will’s skin, the way he whispered Will’s name like a prayer. Each touch, each kiss, was a promise, a declaration of the love they had fought so hard to deny but could no longer hide.

As their pace quickened, the pressure building within them both, Will felt his heart pound like a drum in his chest, the rhythmic beat echoing through every fiber of his being. Each thrust brought them closer, not just to the peak of their pleasure, but to a moment that felt like destiny, a culmination of everything they had endured and everything they had become. Hannibal’s eyes, dark and intense, bore into Will’s with a depth that spoke of eternal devotion. The air was thick with the scent of sweat and desire, each breath a shared, ragged gasp that heightened the urgency between them.

Will’s fingers dug into Hannibal’s hips, guiding him with a firm, steady grip that matched the growing urgency of their movements. The rhythm they created together was a symphony of pleasure, each thrust a note in a melody that was both primal and sacred. Every sensation was heightened, every touch electrified. The pressure within him built to a crescendo, a tidal wave of desire that threatened to overwhelm him.

His mind raced, the weight of the words he had been holding back pressing against his consciousness. It was as if they were trying to claw their way out, making his chest feel tight

and his throat constrict. He had never said them before, never allowed himself to be this vulnerable, this exposed. But here, with Hannibal, in this moment of raw, unfiltered intimacy, he knew it was time. The feeling was an unstoppable force that demanded to be released, a bubble expanding, pressing up against his ribcage, making it hard to breathe.

The anticipation reached a fever pitch, every nerve ending alive with the impending release. Will's breath came in short, desperate gasps, his voice thick with emotion. "God, I love you, Hannibal," he whispered, the words tumbling from his lips like a prayer, a confession, a lifeline.

The moment the words left his mouth, he saw the impact on Hannibal. His eyes widened, a flicker of something indescribable passing through them–relief, joy, love, all mingled together. Hannibal's movements grew more frantic, more urgent, as if he were trying to fuse their bodies into one.

The room seemed to fade away, leaving only the two of them, their breaths mingling, their hearts beating in sync. Will's hands moved to Hannibal's face, roughly grabbing as he pulled him down for a kiss, their lips meeting in a desperate, passionate embrace. The kiss was everything–love, need, desperation, and a promise of forever.

Hannibal's body tensed, the rhythm of his movements growing frantic. Will could feel the tension coiling within him, the impending climax building with every thrust. He whispered against Hannibal's lips, his voice hoarse and trembling, "I love you, Hannibal. Always."

The words were the final push, the breaking point that sent Hannibal over the edge. He threw his head back, a guttural moan escaping his lips as he climaxed, his body convulsing with the force of his release. In that moment, something seemed to unlock within him, a floodgate of emotion and vulnerability that Will had never seen before. As Hannibal gasped and panted, his voice broke into a fervent repetition of, " *Aš tave mylieu* ," the words tumbling from his lips in a desperate, fervent chant.

Will's body responded with an overwhelming intensity. His muscles tightened, his back arched, and a cry of pure ecstasy tore from his throat. Every nerve ending was alight, each pulse of pleasure amplifying as the understanding of Hannibal's words washed over him. "Aš tave myliu"–I love you.

His vision blurred, the edges of his world fading as the sensation consumed him. Hannibal's repeated chant, filled with such desperate need and unfiltered love, intertwined with the sound of their ragged breaths and the rhythmic thrum of their pounding hearts. The sheer intensity of the moment, the convergence of physical and emotional release, felt almost sacred.

Will's hands clung to Hannibal's trembling body, feeling the flex and release of muscles beneath sweat-slicked skin. The sensation of Hannibal's rapid heartbeat, in perfect sync with his own, was reassuring and exhilarating all at once. The room around them seemed to vanish, leaving only the profound connection between them.

As Will rode the waves of his climax, he felt as if he were standing at the altar of a cathedral, Hannibal's body the vessel through which he worshiped. Each kiss, each touch was a sacred

act, a vow of eternal devotion, and the knowledge that Hannibal loved him–truly, deeply, without reservation–cemented their bond in a way that words alone never could. In Hannibal's embrace, Will found not just a lover, but a partner, a soulmate, a deity with whom he shared the most intimate and profound of truths.

In the aftermath, as their bodies slowly calmed and their breathing evened out, Will's heart swelled with an overwhelming wave of love, gratitude, and awe. Will pressed his forehead against Hannibal's, their breaths mingling in the small space between them, as the intensity of the evening faded into a tender warmth.

Hannibal's gaze softened, his fingers gently tracing the contours of Will's face. He began to murmur in his native tongue, the words flowing out in a fervent stream as he pressed gentle kisses all over Will's face, neck, and shoulders. "Aš visada tave saugosiu, niekada tavęs nesužeisiu, myliu tave." His lips brushed against Will's temple, his forehead, trailing down to his jawline.

Will listened, the lyrical cadence of Hannibal's voice washing over him, even if he couldn't understand the specifics. The tenderness of Hannibal's kisses and the fervent emotion in his voice made Will's heart ache.

"Tu esi mano gyvenimas, mano meilė… aš niekada neįsivaizdavau, kad galėčiau jausti taip giliai…" Hannibal whispered, his words a soft, melodic confession, his lips brushing against Will's skin with every utterance.

The foreign phrases felt like a serenade, each word filled with a depth of emotion that transcended language. Will's chest tightened with affection, his heart swelling as he absorbed the intensity of Hannibal's feelings. He reached up, placing a gentle finger on Hannibal's lips, a tender smile curving his own.

"English, please," he murmured, voice gentle with affection.

Hannibal paused, looking adorably confused for a moment. His brow furrowed slightly as he processed Will's request. "Non mi capisci?" he asked, the confusion in his eyes almost childlike.

Will laughed, the sound light and joyous, resonating in the quiet space between them. "I think that was Italian," he said, his smile widening as he looked into Hannibal's eyes, filled with both amusement and adoration.

Hannibal's confusion melted into a soft chuckle, the sound rich and warm. He nuzzled closer, his breath a warm caress against Will's ear. "You are my life, my love… I never imagined I could feel so deeply," he translated, his voice a low, intimate murmur. "I love you, *mylimasis*."

The words, now clear and familiar, wrapped around Will's heart like a warm embrace. He pulled Hannibal closer, their bodies pressed together in a perfect, loving fit. They shared gentle, lingering kisses, each one a promise of love and devotion. Will's lips brushed against Hannibal's cheek, his jaw, and finally his nose, a gentle nuzzle that elicited a quiet chuckle from Hannibal.

“Well, now I know what you said to me that night we ate Tier,” Will murmured between kisses, his lips brushing against Hannibal’s nose.

Hannibal’s eyes sparkled with sincerity as he replied, “I meant it then. I’ve meant it since the moment you ranted at me about eye contact, darling.”

Will snorted, a smile tugging at his lips, but he felt a deep warmth spreading through his chest. “I don’t know when I started loving you,” he said softly, his voice thick with emotion, “but I’m glad we’re here now. After everything we’ve been through, it feels right.”

As the words left his lips, Will’s mind drifted to the tumultuous journey that had brought them here. Images of the past flickered through his mind like an old film reel: vomiting up Abigail’s ear in a haze of confusion and horror, the ravenstag appearing as a dark, enigmatic guide, holding a gun to Hannibal’s head in the Hobbs’ kitchen, torn between duty and an inexplicable need and desire. He remembered the long nights in the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, feeling utterly lost and betrayed, and how he had never imagined finding solace in the very person who had put him there. The trial where Hannibal sat smugly, the burning rage and heartbreak he felt in those moments, the intricate dance of their cat-and-mouse game that blurred the lines between hunter and hunted.

But amidst the chaos and pain, there was always a thread of inevitability tying them together. Hannibal had felt fated, a dark star in his sky that he couldn’t help but orbit. And now, as he held Hannibal close, he realized just how grateful he was for the path that had led them here.

Hannibal’s eyes softened as he watched Will reflect, his thumb gently stroking Will’s cheek. “Out of all the different possible universes, I am infinitely grateful that I get to be in this one with you,” Hannibal murmured, his voice a tender whisper that carried the weight of his emotions.

“It always felt like we were meant to find each other, didn’t it?” Will whispered, his forehead resting against Hannibal’s. “Even when everything was falling apart, there was this pull, this… inevitability.”

Hannibal hummed softly in agreement, the sound vibrating through his chest and into Will’s. They held each other close, sharing breath as the fire crackled warmly in the background. The flames cast a gentle warmth over their intertwined bodies, and the soft light danced across Hannibal’s face, highlighting the tenderness in his eyes and the slight smile playing on his lips.

Will could feel Hannibal’s heartbeat, steady and reassuring, beneath his hand. The rhythm was a soothing counterpoint to the quiet crackling of the fire and the distant hum of the world outside their sanctuary. The scent of woodsmoke mingled with the lingering traces of their shared exertions, a heady mix that anchored Will in the present moment.

For a while, they simply existed in the comfort of each other’s presence, their breathing synchronized, their bodies perfectly attuned. Will’s fingers traced lazy patterns on Hannibal’s back, feeling the play of muscles beneath the skin.

After some time, Will shifted slightly, intending to adjust their position. As he moved, he noticed Hannibal lightly grimacing at the bodily fluids drying on their skin. The sight brought a soft laugh bubbling up from Will's chest, the sound infectious and full of warmth. Without warning, Will stood up from the couch, lifting Hannibal with him, keeping their bodies pressed tightly together. Hannibal, still straddling Will's lap, clung to him instinctively, his eyes widening in surprise.

"I'm strong, too, you know," Will grinned at Hannibal, a mischievous gleam in his eyes.

Hannibal's eyes widened slightly, his breath catching–for a moment, he seemed almost breathless, his lips parting in a silent gasp, before his expression settled into one of pure adoration.

"Indeed you are," he murmured, leaning in to press a kiss to Will's lips.

Together, they made their way to the bathroom, their laughter and light-hearted teasing echoing through the room. It was a moment of pure, unadulterated joy, the kind that made all the hardships they had faced worth it. And as they stepped into the warm spray of the shower, Will knew with certainty that this was where he was meant to be—right here, with Hannibal, forever.

The early morning light filtered softly through the heavy curtains of Hannibal's bedroom, barely illuminating the luxurious space. The room was quiet, the only sounds being the soft rustling of sheets and the faint hum of the world waking up outside. In the midst of this tranquility, Will stirred, his body half-draped over Hannibal's.

Still caught in the haze of sleep, Will felt a pleasant pressure against his groin. Hannibal was squirming back against him, the smooth, firm curve of his ass rubbing insistently into Will's growing erection. Will's breath hitched, a lazy smile tugging at the corners of his lips. In his drowsy state, the sensations felt dreamlike, a sweet blend of comfort and arousal.

Instinctively, Will began to grind back, his hips moving in a slow, languid rhythm. His cock nestled between the warm cheeks of Hannibal's ass, each movement sending shivers of pleasure through his half-awake body. Hannibal let out a soft whine, the sound muffled by the pillow but unmistakably filled with need.

Driven by the intimate noise, Will rolled over onto Hannibal, his chest pressing against the smooth expanse of Hannibal's back. He buried his face in the crook of Hannibal's neck, inhaling the familiar, intoxicating scent that was uniquely his lover's. Will's lips found the sensitive skin there, and he began to suckle gently, leaving a trail of red marks in his wake.

His hips moved with a slow, deliberate rhythm, his cock sliding up and down the cleft of Hannibal's ass. Each lazy thrust brought a soft moan from Hannibal, who was grinding down into the mattress, seeking friction. The bed creaked softly with their movements, the intimate sounds of their bodies mingling with the quiet of the morning.

Will's hands roamed over Hannibal's sides, tracing the lines of his muscles and the curve of his waist. His touch was both tender and possessive, his fingers pressing into the warm flesh

as he continued to move. The pleasure was a slow burn, building steadily with each thrust, each brush of skin against skin.

Hannibal's breathing grew heavier, his body responding eagerly to Will's touch. The feeling of Hannibal's ass grinding against his cock, combined with the soft, needy sounds Hannibal was making, drove Will closer to the edge. He could feel Hannibal's muscles tensing beneath him, the subtle shudders that signaled his rising arousal.

Still caught in the dreamy haze, Will whispered against Hannibal's ear, his voice rough with sleep and desire. "You feel so good," he murmured, his words a mix of reverence and need. "Can't get enough of you."

Hannibal's response was a low, throaty moan, his body arching back into Will's touch. The sound spurred Will on, his thrusts becoming a bit more insistent, his grip on Hannibal tightening. He wanted to draw out every ounce of pleasure, to feel Hannibal come apart beneath him.

As Will continued to move, he found a rhythm that sent sparks of pleasure through both their bodies. The room was filled with the soft sounds of their lovemaking, the gentle slap of skin against skin, the whispered endearments, and the moans that spoke of deep, shared pleasure. Will's world narrowed to the feeling of Hannibal beneath him, the taste of his skin, the scent of their arousal mingling in the air. He was lost in the sensation, in the dreamlike quality of the morning, in the love that flowed between them as naturally as the light filtering through the curtains.

"Will…" Hannibal's voice was a breathless whisper, laden with need and desire. The sound of his name on Hannibal's lips, spoken with such raw emotion, pushed Will closer to the edge. His movements became more urgent, driven by the overwhelming need to release. He could feel the tension coiling in his lower abdomen, the heat pooling and spreading through his veins. His vision blurred at the edges, the world narrowing to the feel of Hannibal's body against his, the sounds of their shared ecstasy filling his ears.

Hannibal's moans grew louder, more desperate, his body arching and writhing beneath Will's touch. The tension in his muscles, the way he pressed back against Will, signaled his own approaching climax. Will's hand slid down Hannibal's side, fingers digging into his hip as he increased the pace, chasing the peak of their shared ecstasy.

Hannibal's body tensed, his back arching off the bed as his climax crashed over him. A guttural moan tore from his throat, his release spilling onto the sheets beneath them. The sight of Hannibal coming undone, the sound of his pleasure, the feel of his body trembling with the force of his orgasm—it was all too much for Will.

As the pleasure reached its peak, Will's hips stuttered, his rhythm faltering as he teetered on the edge. His muscles tensed, his entire body drawn taut. With a final, deep thrust, the tension snapped, and Will was consumed by the intensity of his climax. His face was buried in the crook of Hannibal's back, muffling his raw, guttural cry as he spilled his release between their bodies. The hot, slick evidence of his ecstasy mingled with their sweat, heightening the intimacy of the moment.

His fingers dug into Hannibal's skin, holding on tightly as the waves of pleasure coursed through him. Each pulse of his release was a burst of sensation, leaving him trembling and breathless. Will's body shuddered, his breath coming in ragged pants, the aftershocks of his orgasm leaving him feeling weightless and spent.

The room, now filled with the soft sounds of their spent breaths and the gentle rustling of sheets, felt like a sanctuary. The morning light cast a warm glow over their entwined bodies, highlighting the sheen of sweat on their skin. Will, still nestled against Hannibal, felt the gentle pull of sleep tugging at him once more, the edges of his consciousness growing fuzzier.

His body felt weightless, floating in the afterglow of their dreamy encounter. The warmth and steady rise and fall of Hannibal's breathing beneath him added to the serene, almost ethereal quality of the moment. His eyelids grew heavier with each passing second, the urge to drift back into sleep becoming irresistible.

Before he could fully surrender, Will nuzzled into the crook of Hannibal's neck, his lips brushing against the damp skin. The words slipped out, unbidden and filled with a sleepy, raw honesty. "I love you, baby," he mumbled, his voice thick with the remnants of slumber and sincerity. The declaration hung in the air for a moment, a whispered promise carried on the early morning light.

As the last word left his lips, Will felt his body relax further, his muscles unwinding completely. He slid slightly off Hannibal, their bodies still touching but now more comfortably positioned. The comforting weight of Hannibal's presence grounded him, anchoring him even as he drifted back into the hazy embrace of sleep.

The world around him faded into a soft blur, the golden light dimming as his eyes fluttered shut. The haze of sleep enveloped him once more, and with a contented sigh, Will let himself be pulled under, his breathing evening out into the steady rhythm of deep slumber. The peaceful silence of the room settled around them, the tranquility of their shared space lulling Will into a dreamlike, restorative sleep.

Will found himself waking again, the light in the room having shifted, indicating that a few more hours had passed. The warmth of the sun bathed the room in a gentle glow, the heavy curtains casting soft shadows across the luxurious space. Will blinked slowly, his mind gradually surfacing from the depths of sleep.

As his senses sharpened, Will felt the comforting weight of Hannibal against him. His head rested just below Will's chin, his breath warm and steady against Will's skin. Their legs intertwined beneath the covers, and Will felt a surge of tenderness as he gazed at Hannibal. His lover's usually composed face was softened by sleep, the lines of tension smoothed away.

Hannibal's arm was draped over Will's waist, holding him close even in slumber. The weight of that arm, the casual intimacy of their entwined bodies, filled Will with a deep satisfaction. It was a potent reminder that Hannibal, the man who could manipulate and charm anyone, had chosen to lower his defenses for Will alone. The thought stirred a fierce protectiveness in

Will. This was his Hannibal, his to hold and care for, and no one else would ever have this privilege.

He gently shifted, not wanting to disturb Hannibal, but enough to bring his hand up to stroke through his hair. The room was quiet, save for the occasional distant sound of the world outside. The tranquility of the morning wrapped around them like a warm blanket, and Will relished the peacefulness. He continued to run his fingers through Hannibal's hair, his touch light and affectionate.

Hannibal stirred slightly, a soft sigh escaping his lips as he nestled closer to Will's chest. The movement caused their bodies to press even more intimately together, and Will could feel the steady beat of Hannibal's heart against his own.

As he lay there, holding Hannibal and being held in return, Will felt a profound sense of rightness. This was where he belonged, in the quiet moments of morning light, wrapped in Hannibal's embrace. The love he felt for Hannibal was overwhelming, filling every part of him with warmth and gratitude.

Will pressed a gentle kiss to the top of Hannibal's head, his lips lingering against the soft hair. "Good morning," he whispered, his voice tender and filled with affection.

Hannibal's eyes softened, and he stretched languidly, his expression gentle and affectionate. "Good morning, Will," he replied, his voice still husky from sleep. "Again."

Will laughed, the sound warm and infectious in the quiet room. "Well, I hadn't been ready to wake up yet, but you had other plans, didn't you? Grinding your ass into me like that… what was I supposed to do?"

Hannibal's smile widened, a playful glint appearing in his eyes. "I seem to recall you enjoying it quite a bit," he teased, his fingers lightly tracing patterns on Will's chest.

Will chuckled, feeling a rush of affection for the man in his arms. "Oh, I definitely did. But you can't blame me for getting a bit carried away, can you?"

Hannibal shifted, propping himself up on one elbow to look down at Will, his expression soft but with a hint of mischief. "I suppose not," he said, his voice low and intimate. "I must admit, it was a rather delightful way to wake up."

Will grinned, reaching up to run his fingers through Hannibal's hair. "You know, if you keep doing that, I might just have to make it a regular morning routine," he teased, his eyes sparkling.

Hannibal leaned down, brushing his lips lightly against Will's in a tender, teasing kiss. "I wouldn't object," he murmured against Will's mouth, the warmth of his breath sending a shiver down Will's spine.

As they settled back into the pillows, Will's fingers idly traced patterns on Hannibal's back. "Hannibal," he began, his voice thoughtful, "about that guy at the bar… do you have plans for him?"

Hannibal's eyes sparkled with dark amusement. "Not immediately," he replied, his tone light with an undercurrent of menace. "Though I would love nothing more than to make a display of him for you. He was, after all, quite the artless brute."

The words sent a thrill down Will's spine. For a moment, he was breathless, imagining the tableau Hannibal would create—dark, twisted, and beautiful, all for him. The depth of Hannibal's adoration struck him again, leaving him momentarily overwhelmed. He had never been loved like this, with such fervent devotion and dark passion. Despite himself, Will felt a fond exasperation. Hannibal's need to turn everything into a grand display was both frustrating and endearing. It was part of what he loved about him, this relentless pursuit of beauty in even the darkest corners.

Will rolled his eyes, his hand moving to gently stroke Hannibal's hair. "You and your art," he teased, his touch affectionate. "Do you ever tire of turning everything into a masterpiece?"

"Art is my lifeblood, Will," Hannibal responded, nuzzling closer to Will's chest, his voice carrying a blend of sincerity and amusement. "Even the mundane can be transformed into something extraordinary with the right… touch." He emphasized his point by ghosting his hand over Will's hip.

Will imagined Hannibal's skilled fingers tracing delicate patterns on skin, turning flesh into art. He thought about the way those hands gripped his hips, strong and possessive, the way they roamed over his body, knowing exactly where to touch to drive him wild. The thought sent a bolt of arousal through him, his body responding to the vivid images.

But practicality brought him back, grounding him. They had to be careful right now. His other hand came up to cup Hannibal's cheek. "Just promise me you'll be careful. We can't afford any unnecessary attention."

Hannibal nodded, pressing a kiss to Will's collarbone. "I promise. But rest assured, Will, I will always protect what is mine."

Will felt a shiver of possessive thrill at Hannibal's words. He reached out, tracing a finger along Hannibal's jawline, feeling the steady pulse beneath the skin. "I know you will, Hannibal," he said softly, his voice filled with trust and affection. For a moment, he simply enjoyed the quiet intimacy, the way their breaths synchronized. Then, a darker thought crossed his mind, pulling him back to the events of the previous evening. "Speaking of Mason, you protected me pretty well last night from that slimy excuse for a human being. The man is a walking caricature of greed and arrogance. I can't imagine anyone enjoying his company unless they were being paid for it."

Hannibal's lips curled into a small, amused smile, a dark glint in his eyes. "Indeed, Mason's charm is as thin as his morals. It's almost impressive how he manages to combine the worst traits of humanity into one unpleasant package."

"You make him sound like some kind of grotesque art piece," Will chuckled, shaking his head. "The kind you'd only look at because you can't believe how hideous it is."

“Perhaps that’s why I find him so intriguing,” Hannibal replied, his tone light but with an edge of sincerity. “He is a study in the depths of human depravity. An unintentional masterpiece of sorts.”

Will snorted. “Only you, Hannibal, would find a way to turn someone like Mason into an art critique. But seriously, he’s dangerous. His wealth and influence make him a formidable enemy.”

Hannibal’s expression turned serious, the gleam in his eyes dimming. “Yes, his resources and ruthlessness are not to be underestimated. But rest assured, Will, we will handle Mason when the time comes. He will not harm you.”

Will’s hand moved to gently caress Hannibal’s cheek, his touch soft and reassuring. “I trust you, Hannibal.”

Hannibal leaned into Will’s touch, his eyes closing for a brief moment as if savoring the contact. “Your trust means everything to me, Will,” he murmured, his voice filled with sincerity. He opened his eyes, the intensity of his gaze meeting Will’s. Hannibal’s lips curled into a soft smile, a hint of playfulness returning to his eyes. “But now, I really must insist we shower,” he said with a slight grimace, his tone light yet firm.

Will grinned up at him, a spark in his eyes. “Again?” he asked, teasing, his voice laced with mock innocence. He knew full well that their respective releases from earlier were dried all over them, a sticky reminder of their morning activities.

Hannibal threw him a pointed look, his lips curving into a smirk. “Unless you prefer spending the rest of the day covered in dried evidence of our earlier… indulgence,” he retorted, his tone both teasing and matter-of-fact. “And we will need to change the sheets as well.”

Will laughed, the sound bright and carefree. “Alright, alright,” he conceded, still chuckling. “You’ve convinced me. But only because I don’t want to stick to the sheets every time I move.”

Hannibal’s smile softened, a touch of affection in his gaze. “Come on, then,” he said, pulling back slightly and offering his hand to Will. “Let’s get cleaned up. I promise it will be worth it.”

Will took Hannibal’s hand, allowing himself to be pulled up from the bed. “Lead the way,” he said, a teasing lilt in his voice. As they made their way to the bathroom, Will couldn’t resist adding, “But don’t think this means I’m done teasing you for the morning.”

Hannibal’s laughter echoed in the room, a deep, rich sound that made Will’s heart swell. “I wouldn’t expect anything less,” he replied, squeezing Will’s hand as they stepped into the bathroom together.

The bathroom was filled with warm, fragrant steam as they stepped under the hot spray of the shower. Hannibal’s hands moved with gentle precision, lathering the soap and running it over

Will’s body in slow, deliberate strokes. Will closed his eyes, savoring the tender attention, feeling the warmth of the water and the softness of Hannibal’s touch.

As the soap washed away the remnants of their morning passion, Will found himself lost in the rhythmic sound of the water. He closed his eyes for a moment, feeling the warmth of the shower and the gentle touch of Hannibal’s hands. When he opened his eyes, he met Hannibal’s gaze, and the love and care he saw there took his breath away. Will reached out, cupping Hannibal’s face in his hands, his thumbs gently brushing the wet skin. Without a word, he pulled Hannibal into a deep, lingering kiss, the connection between them stronger than ever.

Hannibal responded with equal fervor, his hands sliding around to cradle the back of Will’s head, deepening the kiss. They stayed like that for a long moment, wrapped in each other, the world outside forgotten.

Finally, Hannibal pulled back slightly, his forehead resting against Will’s. “Thank you,” he whispered, his voice filled with emotion.

Will smiled, his heart full. “For what?” he asked softly.

“For everything,” Hannibal replied, his voice hitching ever so slightly. “For being here, for understanding, for loving me.”

Will’s smile widened, and he pressed another soft kiss to Hannibal’s lips, before murmuring, “Always.”

Chapter End Notes

"Aš visada tave saugosiu, niekada tavęs nesužeisiu, myliu tave." = I will always protect you, I will never hurt you, I love you.

"Tu esi mano gyvenimas, mano meilė… aš niekada neįsivaizdavau, kad galėčiau jausti taip giliai…" = You are my life, my love... I never imagined I could feel so deeply...

as always, i hope you enjoyed!!

if you did, please please please drop a comment here or come find me on tumblr @graciereadshannigram <3

Strings of Deception

Chapter Notes

hello my loves!! thank you for your patience with this chapter – it's a solid 5k longer than usual so hopefully that makes up for having to wait a little longer than expected!

for the purposes of this fic, Hannibal doesn't really know what okra is! i humbly request that your suspension of disbelief extends to this (highly improbable) idea!

and i also request your grace when it comes to my incorporation of cajun french :)

and, ya girl learned something new! if you're reading on desktop, you can hover over italicised foreign language text for translations! for those of y'all reading on mobile or tablets/e-readers, see the end notes for translations.

beta'd by EnmitiesSaddestGlare and Jay_Is_A_Rat, xxxxx <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After showering, they ate breakfast together, savoring the peaceful morning. The sun streamed through the kitchen window, casting a warm glow over the table as they shared a simple meal. Will found himself reluctant to break the spell of tranquility. He knew he wasn't ready to leave and didn't want to admit that he had to get back to Wolf Trap. A small voice nagged at him, suggesting he might be overstaying his welcome. Hannibal was a man of routine, surely he had other things to attend to, obligations that didn't involve Will.

The thought of returning to his house alone weighed heavily on him. What once felt like a sanctuary now seemed hollow, the remoteness that had once provided comfort now leaving him restless and lonely. Without Hannibal, the familiar silence felt oppressive, the emptiness echoing around him in a way that made him feel cold. The irony wasn't lost on him–he had once sought solitude, craved it even, but now the idea of going back to that quiet house, with only the dogs for company, made his chest tighten with an ache he wasn't sure how to soothe.

Hannibal, as if reading the unease Will hadn't voiced, glanced over with a subtle, knowing look. The way his eyes softened, the quiet shift in his demeanor, spoke volumes–he understood. Without needing to ask, he knew the idea of returning to that empty house weighed heavily on Will.

"There's no need to be alone," Hannibal said, his tone gentle, carefully measured as if testing the waters. "If it wouldn't be too presumptuous, I could accompany you."

The offer, so attuned to Will's unspoken fears, struck him with a wave of unexpected gratitude. The knot in his chest dissolved, and he found himself nodding before the words

fully registered. “I’d like that,” he replied, the warmth of affection flooding through him, grateful for Hannibal’s understanding in a way that went beyond words.

Hannibal packed an overnight bag, a small gesture that warmed Will’s entire body. The simple act of preparation felt like a promise, a subtle affirmation of Hannibal’s presence in his life. Will watched as Hannibal meticulously folded a few items of clothing and carefully placed them into the bag, the precision of his movements somehow reassuring. Before closing the bag, Hannibal added a leather-bound sketchbook and a set of charcoals, tucking them into a side pocket with the same care he gave to everything else. The gesture felt like a quiet promise that he wasn’t just coming to Wolf Trap to keep Will company–he was bringing part of his world with him, ready to create something new alongside Will.

On the way to Will’s house, Hannibal requested they stop for groceries. Will agreed, curious to see this side of Hannibal in a more mundane setting. At the grocery store, they engaged in light banter, their voices mingling with the soft hum of background music and the occasional announcement over the loudspeakers.

Hannibal’s insistence on stocking Will’s fridge and pantry was met with playful eye rolls. “I’m perfectly capable of feeding myself, you know,” Will teased, though he couldn’t fully suppress the chuckle at Hannibal’s raised eyebrow and smirk.

“Of course,” his tone making it clear this was a massive understatement, “but we both know that our standards for what it means to ‘feed oneself’ differ greatly. I would prefer not to compromise on those standards.”

Will chuckled, shaking his head as they continued down the aisle. The conversation shifted naturally, their banter easing into a more relaxed rhythm. They began debating the merits of various cheeses and discussing the best way to prepare fresh vegetables, their voices intertwining in the shared space.

As they moved through the produce section, Will paused, picking up a piece of okra. “You know, I haven’t seen okra in a while. I miss it–reminds me of home,” he said, a nostalgic note in his voice. Hannibal gave him a blank look.

“Okra? I must admit that I am less than familiar,” Hannibal mused, his tone genuinely curious but slightly dismissive.

Will stared at him, not having to feign his shock and mild offense. “You’ve never had okra? It’s a staple back home–we make gumbo with it,” he explained, shaking his head in mock disappointment. “Guess I’ll have to show you.”

Hannibal’s brow furrowed slightly, a rare moment of culinary ignorance. “It’s not a common ingredient in my repertoire,” he admitted with a small, almost sheepish smile.

The expression that accompanied Hannibal’s admission made something warm unfurl in Will’s chest. He wondered if it would always be mildly disarming, seeing the man who was always perfectly dressed, perfectly polite, perfectly knowledgeable in every way, admit to a gap in his vast array of skills, or if Will would miraculously become immune to it.

Will grinned, placing a few in the basket. “Well, it’s about time you learned. I’ll make gumbo for you this weekend. You’ll see what you’ve been missing.”

As they continued through the store, the lighthearted mood lingered. Hannibal moved through the store with confidence, selecting items with a discerning eye, while Will pushed the cart, occasionally sneaking in a bag of chips or a box of cookies, much to Hannibal’s feigned disapproval. “Really, Will, do you need that?” Hannibal would ask, only to be met with a cheeky grin and a shrug.

“Absolutely. What’s life without a little indulgence?” Will retorted, tossing the cookies into the cart with a flourish.

Will couldn’t deny the pleasure he felt at the domesticity of it all. Each item added to the cart felt like a building block in the foundation of something solid and lasting. By the time they left the store, their cart was filled with a balance of nutritious ingredients and indulgent snacks, a marker of the merging of their lives and tastes.

Back in Wolf Trap, Hannibal fit into Will’s life with an ease that was almost startling. Dressed in relaxed yet clearly designer clothing, he moved through the space as if he had always belonged there. He took the dogs outside, playing with them in the backyard; the sight of him throwing sticks and laughing with the dogs was both heartwarming and surreal. Hannibal’s presence was a calming force, an anchor in the small house that had recently begun to feel too big and empty.

Inside, Hannibal’s meticulous nature showed in the smallest details. He tidied up the kitchen, rearranging the spices and utensils with an efficiency that made everything seem more organized, more harmonious. He found an old record player and selected a classical album, filling the house with soothing melodies that complemented the quiet rustling of pages as Will graded papers and worked on his research. The music blended seamlessly into the background, creating an ambiance of calm and focus.

The day was warm and filled with the golden light of the sun, casting long shadows and bathing the house in a cozy glow. As the sun dipped below the horizon, the evening air turned much colder. Hannibal, ever attentive, prepared a warm, hearty dinner to chase away the chill. He crafted a rustic lamb stew–made with actual lamb, Will confirmed. It was rich with root vegetables, aromatic herbs, and tender chunks of meat that fell apart at the touch of a fork. The scent of rosemary and thyme mingled with the savory aroma of slow-cooked lamb, filling the house with a mouth-watering promise.

As they ate, their conversation flowed easily, touching on everything from Will’s research to Hannibal’s latest culinary experiments. Hannibal listened intently as Will talked about his work, his eyes reflecting a deep, genuine interest. Will found himself opening up more than he had expected, the warmth of the fire and the wine loosening his standard reticence. It felt surprisingly good to discuss something that wasn’t related to teaching or crime scenes, to share his thoughts on forensic entomology with someone who truly seemed to care.

After dinner, they moved closer to the fire, Hannibal pulling a thick, soft blanket over them as they sat on the couch. Will leaned into Hannibal’s side, feeling the steady rise and fall of

his chest. They shared quiet moments, the silence between them comfortable and filled with a gentle peace.

After a while, Hannibal reached for a book on the coffee table. “Shall I read to you?” he asked softly, his voice a soothing murmur. Will nodded, a small smile tugging at his lips. He nestled closer as Hannibal opened the book and began to read, his deep, melodic voice weaving through the words and filling the room with a sense of calm.

Time seemed to slow as they sat together, the world outside fading into insignificance. The fire crackled softly, the scent of burning wood mingling with the lingering aroma of their earlier meal. Will’s eyelids grew heavy, the cadence of Hannibal’s voice lulling him into a state of relaxed drowsiness.

Eventually, Hannibal’s reading slowed, his own voice growing softer as he, too, succumbed to the soothing atmosphere. He closed the book gently, setting it aside before wrapping his arm more securely around Will. As the night deepened, Will shifted slightly, pressing a soft kiss to Hannibal’s jaw. “Thank you,” he murmured, his voice thick with emotion and contentment. Hannibal’s eyes softened, a tender smile gracing his lips as he returned the kiss with gentle affection.

“I love you,” Will whispered, the words carrying the weight of his feelings, his voice barely audible over the crackling fire.

Hannibal’s gaze met Will’s, his eyes shining with warmth and sincerity. “And I love you, dearest Will.”

Sunday morning dawned softly, the first rays of sunlight filtering through the curtains and casting a gentle glow over the room. Will stirred, feeling the warmth of the sun on his face and the comforting weight of the blankets around him. He felt well rested; sleeping next to Hannibal came with the added benefit of getting the best sleep of his life, the kind that he hadn’t experienced in years. As he opened his eyes, he found Hannibal lying next to him, propped up on one elbow, gazing at him with an expression of pure adoration. The sight made Will’s heart skip a beat.

Hannibal’s eyes were soft and full of affection, an expression Will was growing accustomed to seeing. He hesitated for a moment, as if gathering his courage, before speaking. “Will,” he began, his voice unusually shy, “would you allow me to draw you? The early morning light is just right, and I’d like to capture you in this moment.”

Will felt a mix of emotions at the request. The idea of being the subject of Hannibal’s artistic gaze both thrilled and unnerved him. He could see the earnestness in Hannibal’s eyes, the genuine desire to create something beautiful. Squashing down his discomfort, he nodded, a small smile playing on his lips. “Alright,” he agreed softly. “But only if you promise not to make me look too…” He trailed off with a groan; his brain wasn’t fully on yet, and he struggled to find the right words to express his feelings.

Hannibal chuckled softly, the sound warm and reassuring. “Too perfect?” he offered, his eyes twinkling with amusement.

Will rolled his eyes, a hint of blush spreading across his face. “Too ridiculous,” he corrected, feeling the morning haze slowly lifting from his mind. “Just… be nice, okay?”

“Always,” Hannibal promised, his voice gentle. He reached out, brushing a strand of hair away from Will’s face, his touch lingering for a moment. “You’re already beautiful, Will. I would be honored to capture that.”

Hannibal’s expression turned analytical for a moment before slightly rearranging Will’s limbs so the early morning light streamed in through the window, casting a soft, golden glow over his body. “Just relax,” Hannibal murmured, his voice soothing. “I want to capture you as you are.”

Will settled into the bed, his body relaxing despite the lingering nerves. He watched as Hannibal set up his sketchpad and charcoals, moving with the precise grace that seemed to define everything he did. The room was quiet, the only sounds being the soft scratch of charcoal and the occasional rustle of sheets. Will watched Hannibal work, marveling at the focus and care he poured into each stroke. Despite his initial discomfort, he found himself becoming drowsy, lulled by the soothing rhythm of Hannibal’s movements and the quiet atmosphere.

When Hannibal finally finished, he looked up, a bashful smile illuminating his features. Will was momentarily distracted by how beautiful the expression looked on Hannibal’s face. Will wondered how often Hannibal had allowed someone to see him like this. The thought tugged at Will’s heartstrings.

“It’s not done,” Hannibal murmured, almost embarrassed. “I’d need acrylics to fully capture your beauty, but… I’d like you to see it.” He handed the sketchpad to Will, his fingers brushing lightly against Will’s as he did.

Will took the pad, his breath catching as he looked at the drawing. The figure on the paper was unmistakably him, yet somehow more. Hannibal had captured not just his likeness, but something deeper–an essence, a radiance that Will hadn’t known he possessed. He looked beautiful, just as Hannibal had claimed.

“Is this…” Will trailed off as words escaped him. “Is this how you see me?” His voice was barely above a whisper, eyes still fixed on the sketch. He felt a surge of emotion, a mixture of awe and vulnerability, as he realized the depth of Hannibal’s perception and the intensity of his feelings.

Hannibal reached out, his hand resting gently on Will’s. “Yes,” he said simply, his eyes meeting Will’s with unwavering sincerity. “Beautiful, strong, and worthy of every bit of affection I have to give.” The moment hung between them, filled with unspoken emotions. Hannibal’s gaze was steady, his eyes conveying a depth of feeling that Will still wasn’t entirely accustomed to, despite everything. The weight of it pressed down on him, stirring something deep inside. Will felt a flutter in his chest, an almost uncomfortable intensity that left him momentarily breathless.

Will felt a lump rise in his throat, his emotions swirling. He reached out, pulling Hannibal into a deep, tender kiss. “Thank you,” he murmured against Hannibal’s lips. “For seeing me

like this."

He lingered in that closeness, unable to let go just yet. Without a second thought, Will gently tugged Hannibal back into bed. They tangled together beneath the sheets, their bodies moving in a slow, worshipful rhythm. Every touch, every kiss, was a reaffirmation of their newly acknowledged love. They took breaks only to eat pieces of ripe, juicy fruit and to let the dogs out, the animals bounding around them in the yard before settling back down.

The morning bled quietly into the afternoon. Will returned to his research, papers and books spread out around him, while Hannibal continued to sketch, his gaze occasionally flicking up to observe Will with a soft, affectionate smile. They spent several hours like this, each absorbed in their respective tasks yet constantly aware of the other's presence. The quiet companionship was comforting, something Will couldn't have imagined wanting. Even just a few months ago, he would have scoffed at the idea of wanting someone else just existing in his space.

Yet, here he was, feeling a warmth in his chest every time he caught Hannibal's eye or heard the soft scratch of charcoal on paper. There was a peace in the silence between them, a sense of belonging that was both foreign and exhilarating. It was so different compared to the isolation he had once sought so fervently, the walls he had built around himself to keep others out. Now, those walls felt unnecessary, even suffocating, compared to the openness he shared with Hannibal.

After a while, Will noticed Hannibal setting his sketch materials aside, the soft rustling of paper followed by the gentle click of a charcoal stick being laid down. Hannibal stood, stretching slightly before wandering over to Will's piano, his fingers brushing over the polished surface as if reacquainting himself with an old friend. Will looked up from his research, curiosity piqued, and met Hannibal's gaze.

"Would you mind if I played?" Hannibal asked, his voice soft, almost tentative, as if seeking permission to step into another intimate space of Will's life, showcasing a quiet respect for the boundaries that still lingered between them.

Will's eyes softened as he nodded. "Of course, go ahead," he replied, his voice carrying an unspoken warmth, a subtle invitation to share in something personal.

Hannibal's expression remained composed, but there was a flicker of appreciation in his eyes as he took a seat at the piano. He adjusted the bench slightly, his fingers hovering just above the keys for a moment as he gathered his thoughts. When his hands finally descended, the first notes were soft, delicate, as if he were testing the waters, letting the music emerge naturally.

Will leaned back in his chair, watching as Hannibal settled into the rhythm of the piece. The music flowed from the piano like a gentle stream, wrapping around Will in a swath of sound. It was as if Hannibal were speaking through the notes, sharing a part of himself that words could never quite capture.

After a few moments, Will let his eyes drift back to his research, but the music remained, intertwining with his thoughts, providing a soothing undercurrent to his work. The melody

seemed to echo the connection between them, a silent conversation that needed no words, only the language of music and understanding.

Every now and then, Will would look up from his work to find Hannibal studying him with a tender intensity that made his heart flutter, even as his fingers continued to produce such beautiful music. Will found himself smiling more, feeling lighter, as if a weight he hadn't fully acknowledged had been lifted from his shoulders. He marveled at how easily Hannibal fit into his life, how their routines had effortlessly intertwined. The simple act of being in the same room, each doing their own thing, felt more intimate than any grand gesture ever could.

As the sun began to dip lower in the sky, casting long shadows across the room, the atmosphere started to shift. The afternoon was coming to an end, and Will could feel the transition to evening approaching. He glanced at the clock, noting the time, and then looked over at Hannibal, who was coming to the end of whatever piece he had been most recently playing.

"If we want authentic gumbo at a reasonable hour, we should get started," Will said with a slight smile, his fingers tapping lightly against the table in a rhythmic pattern. The anticipation of the evening's meal was evident in his tone; his eyes gleamed with a mix of eagerness and nostalgia, the corners of his mouth twitching upward as he thought about the familiar process of creating the dish.

Nodding, Hannibal's eyes twinkled with amusement as he stood up from the piano. "Indeed," he replied, a touch of laughter in his voice. He moved to put his forgotten sketching materials away, carefully placing his charcoals and sketchbook back in his bag with the same meticulous care he applied to everything else. Will admired the way Hannibal handled each item, as if they were precious artifacts, and felt a surge of affection for the man who had become such an integral part of his life.

With that task done, Will's eyes followed Hannibal as he moved to the closet, pulling out a thick coat and wrapping a scarf around his neck. He bundled himself up, ready to brave the cold before he opened the back door and called the dogs by name, his voice gentle and affectionate. The cold winter air filtered in, carrying with it the sharp scent of the outdoors. Despite the chill, Will felt a warmth spread through him at how seamlessly Hannibal had fit into his life in Wolf Trap. It was as if he had always been there, a constant, comforting presence.

Heart swelling, Will watched as Winston trotted out first, followed by Buster and then the rest, each one responding eagerly to Hannibal's summons. The sight of Hannibal bending down to give each dog a pat on the head, murmuring softly to them–this domestic bliss, this shared routine, was something he had never expected to find, and yet here it was, so natural and right.

He stood in the doorway, watching Hannibal disappear outside with the dogs. He felt a rush of love for the man who was becoming his partner in every sense. Knowing that they loved each other deeply–madly–was almost overwhelming. Will took a deep breath, savoring the moment. The sight of Hannibal's tall figure moving gracefully through the yard, the dogs running around him, was a vision that Will cherished deeply.

Knowing Hannibal would be outside for a few minutes ensuring the dogs expended enough energy, Will headed into the kitchen to get ready to cook. He began by gathering the ingredients, each one selected for authenticity. He tied an apron around his waist, the fabric slightly worn but comforting in its familiarity. A determined look settled on his face as he set the kitchen for the task ahead, each motion precise and purposeful. The act of cooking, especially a dish so steeped in his heritage, filled him with a quiet joy.

Just as Will finished assembling everything they'd need, Hannibal came back inside, cheeks and nose tinged with red from the cold. His eyes scanned the array of ingredients laid out on the counter, a small smile playing on his lips as he took in the scene. "Will Graham, taking charge in the kitchen? This is a new development," he quipped, his tone teasing but laced with genuine curiosity and admiration.

"You seem to like it when I take charge in other areas," he replied, his voice carrying a hint of a drawl and a playful innuendo. "Why not in the kitchen as well?" His eyes sparkled with mischief, and he felt a surge of pleasure as Hannibal's pupils dilated.

Hannibal chuckled, the sound rich and warm. He stepped closer to Will, the air between them charged with affection and playful energy. "Indeed, I do," Hannibal said softly, his eyes meeting Will's with an intensity that made Will's heart race.

The playful mood melted into something more tender as Will was hit with a powerful wave of love and gratitude for the man standing before him. It was almost too much to bear, the sheer depth of his feelings for Hannibal, and Will felt a sudden irresistible urge to hold him, to feel the solid reality of him in his arms.

Without a word, Will moved closer, his hands reaching out to gently grasp Hannibal's shoulders. He pulled him into a tight embrace, as Hannibal's own arms encircled Will in turn, holding just as tightly. The warmth of Hannibal's body enveloped him as he buried his face in the crook of Hannibal's neck, breathing in the familiar, comforting scent of his cologne mixed with the wintry outdoors.

"I love you," Will murmured into Hannibal's skin, feeling goosebumps rise in the wake of his breath. He wondered if he'd ever get tired of telling Hannibal. It was an immense relief to be able to say those words aloud, knowing the sentiment was returned.

Hannibal's breath hitched just barely, a subtle sign of his own vulnerability. "And I, you, *mylimasis* ," he replied, his voice a tender caress. Will leaned in, their lips meeting in a gentle kiss, soft and unhurried. As their lips parted, they remained close, sharing breath, their foreheads touching. Will's eyes met Hannibal's, the intimate gaze between them conveying what could not be put into words.

With a final, lingering look, Will gently pulled back, his hands trailing down Hannibal's arms before finally releasing him. He took a deep breath, the warmth of the moment still clinging to him, and turned his attention to the task at hand.

Hannibal, ever observant, watched him closely. "What can I do to assist?" he asked, stepping closer to the counter. His eyes moved deliberately over the ingredients, surveying the neatly

arranged vegetables, spices, and meats. With a subtle nod of approval, he reached out to adjust a stray piece of celery, aligning it perfectly with the rest.

Will glanced up, brushing a hand through his hair. “I’ll let you know–just listen for a moment,” he replied, his tone holding a hint of amusement. “We start with the holy trinity of Cajun cooking,” Will explained, his voice calm and instructive as he slipped into his comfortable role of teacher. “Onions, bell peppers, and celery. It’s the foundation of any authentic gumbo.”

Will moved with practiced ease, his knife flashing as he chopped onions, bell peppers, and celery with precision. The rhythmic thud of the blade against the cutting board was almost meditative, the familiar motions bringing a sense of peace and contentment. He glanced at Hannibal, who watched him intently, a slight smile playing on his lips.

“Each one adds a different layer of flavor,” Will explained, his voice filled with excitement. He continued chopping and stirring, clearly in his element. “The onions give it sweetness, the bell peppers add a bit of bite, and the celery brings a subtle earthiness.”

Hannibal’s eyes widened slightly in appreciation. “I bow to your expertise, Will,” he said, a gentle smile crinkling his eyes. “Your passion is inspiring.”

As he spoke, Will felt a warm glow across his cheeks, appreciating the rare opportunity to be the expert in the kitchen. He handed the half-chopped vegetables to Hannibal. “Here, take these and finish chopping them while I prepare the okra.”

Hannibal took over the task with his accustomed finesse as Will moved to pull out a new knife and cutting board. He grabbed a handful of fresh okra, slicing it into thin rounds. The distinctive sound of knives cutting through the tender vegetables filled the kitchen. Once the okra was prepared, he heated a pan and added a generous amount of butter, watching it melt and sizzle before adding the sliced vegetable.

“The okra needs to be sautéed in butter before we add it to the roux,” Will explained, his voice calm and instructive. “It’ll keep the gumbo from gettin’ too slimy an’ add a rich flavor to the base.” As he spoke, Will noticed his accent slipping through more than usual, dropping g’s and d’s in a way that felt both familiar and foreign. He hadn’t heard himself speak like this in years, and it gave him a twinge of self-consciousness. For a moment, he wondered if Hannibal would pick up on the change, feeling ill at ease, but the feeling quickly subsided. There was a certain comfort in letting this part of himself resurface.

The kitchen was filled with the aromatic blend of onions, bell peppers, and celery mingling with the earthy scent of sautéing okra. Once the okra was a perfect golden brown, Will set it aside. He turned to Hannibal, who had finished chopping the vegetables into pieces precisely uniform in size.

“Now, we need to slice the sausage and chicken,” Will directed, feeling a sense of kinship in their shared task. He smirked as he added, “Although, it really is too bad we don’t have any long pork on hand.”

Hannibal paused, giving Will a look that was the elegant equivalent of an eye roll–his eyebrow arching delicately, a faint, amused smile tugging at his lips. “I believe the traditional meats will suffice for tonight,” he replied dryly.

Will chuckled, feeling a warm sense of camaraderie. “Fair enough. Traditional it is.”

Hannibal nodded, taking up the sausage and chicken with the same dedication, slicing them into even pieces. Will continued to work, feeling a sense of contentment settle over him. Hannibal’s presence was a comforting constant, and the kitchen filled with the rich, enticing aromas of onions, bell peppers, celery, and now a hint of smoky sausage. The air was thick with the promise of a hearty meal, the kind that wrapped around you like a comforting blanket on a cold night.

Satisfied with their progress, Will moved on to the roux, blending flour and oil with meticulous care. The mixture slowly darkened, turning from a pale beige to a rich, chocolate brown, releasing an earthy aroma that hinted at the deep, layered flavors to come. His eyes remained fixed on the pot, movements steady and rhythmic as he stirred. “We gotta keep stirrin’, no matter how long it takes. A good roux is the foundation of the gumbo’s flavor,” he explained, his voice carrying the confidence of someone who had perfected this ritual over many years.

Hannibal watched with interest, then dryly commenting, “I do know how to make a roux, Will. I am not completely useless in the kitchen, as you may be aware.”

Will glanced up, amusement sparking in his eyes. “Oh, I know ya not useless, Hannibal. But this is my territory. ‘Sides, I thought you might enjoy seeing how it’s really done.”

Hannibal chuckled, a flicker of something dark appearing in his eyes at Will’s relaxed drawl before disappearing just as quickly. “Touché. I suppose I could learn a thing or two from you.”

“Haven’t you already?” Will said with an air of wicked innocence, his tone teasing, though the softness in his expression betrayed a deeper sincerity as he continued to stir.

Hannibal responded, “That I have, my dear boy,” his voice low, carrying a different, more intense kind of hunger. He stepped up to the stove, taking the spoon from Will and mimicking his movements, carefully stirring the thickening mixture. The rich aroma of the roux filled the kitchen, and the gentle bubbling of the mixture created a soothing backdrop to their shared task.

As they stirred, the conversation flowed naturally, weaving between light-hearted banter and moments of comfortable silence. The task required patience and precision, each movement deliberate and rhythmic as the roux darkened, thickening into the rich base required for Will’s recipe.

Hannibal asked occasional questions, his curiosity piqued. “Why do you let the roux get so dark? Doesn’t it risk becoming bitter?”

Will's eyes lit up at the question, thrilled to be sharing his expertise. "That's a great question. The dark roux is what gives the gumbo its depth. It adds a rich, nutty flavor that you just can't get with a lighter roux. It's all about patience and timing. You have to cook it slow and steady to get it just right."

When the roux reached the perfect shade, Will nodded approvingly. "Now we add the holy trinity," he said, his tone a mix of pride and humility. He picked up a bowl filled with chopped onions, bell peppers, and celery. "This is where the magic happens. You gotta let these cook down until they're almost caramelized."

The vegetables hit the hot roux with a satisfying sizzle, the kitchen instantly filling with a fragrant blend of aromas. The sight of the vibrant green, white, and red vegetables against the dark roux was a visual feast, promising the deep, complex flavors of a well-made gumbo.

As Will stirred, he felt a deep satisfaction in sharing these details with Hannibal. He explained each step with careful attention, enjoying the rare opportunity to be the teacher in their dynamic. It struck him that he had never had someone to share this part of his heritage with before. Cooking this traditional dish, explaining its nuances and secrets, felt like opening a part of himself he had kept hidden. Instead of the vulnerability feeling painful, as it so often had in the past, this moment felt like a release of pressure he hadn't realized had been building inside him over the years. It was as though he was finally allowing himself to breathe freely, to let another person–Hannibal, of all people–see a part of him that had been tucked away in the quiet corners of his mind.

Smiling to himself, Will directed Hannibal to add the sliced sausage and chicken to the pot. "Now we add the meat," he said, his voice carrying the confidence of someone who knew the recipe by heart. "The sausage will give it a nice smokiness, and the chicken will soak up all those wonderful flavors."

Hannibal moved with his natural poise, carefully placing the slices of sausage and chunks of chicken into the simmering pot. As the meat hit the hot mixture, a satisfying sizzle filled the kitchen, mingling with the sounds of the vegetables cooking down. The comforting sounds of sizzling, bubbling, and the occasional soft pop from the sausage was music to Will's ears, a familiar melody that brought a sense of comfort.

He glanced at Hannibal, who was intently watching the pot, clearly impressed by the transformation taking place. The addition of the sausage brought a smoky aroma that immediately began to blend with the existing scents, creating a richer, more complex fragrance.

"Now we add the broth." As the smoky fragrance filled the room, Will carefully poured in the chicken broth, careful to make sure it all landed in the pot. "It's important to let it come to a simmer slowly, and then we'll add the spices to build the layers of flavor," he explained, his voice steady and calm. As the clear liquid met the hot roux and vegetables, a soft crackle filled the air, accompanied by the gentle bubbling of the simmering gumbo.

Will turned his attention back to the sautéed okra, picking up the golden-brown pieces and adding them to the pot. "We'll add the okra now," he said, as he gently stirred it in. "Okra's got a couple of important jobs in gumbo. First, it acts as a natural thickener, givin' the gumbo

a nice, hearty consistency without the need for additional thickeners like cornstarch. Second, it adds a unique flavor and texture that just adds that extra something special."

Hannibal observed the process with keen interest, nodding appreciatively. "I can see how the okra's mucilaginous properties would help create that characteristic thickness. It's fascinating how different cultures utilize ingredients for similar purposes."

Will paused, a playful glint in his eyes as he glanced over at Hannibal. "Mucilaginous, huh? Y'know, normal people would just say 'slimy'", he teased, his smile widening. "But leave it to you to make it sound like a science experiment meets an art form."

Hannibal huffed a small laugh, the sound low and warm. He reached out, briefly resting his hand on Will's arm. "Precision in language, Will. It's all in the details."

Chuckling as he shakes his head, Will continued, "You're right, though. It's all 'bout balancing the flavors and textures." He noticed Hannibal's eyes dart to his mouth as he spoke, catching the subtle shift in Will's accent. Will winked at him, a playful glimmer in his eye, knowing that his excitement was bringing out the thickness of his Louisiana drawl. "The key is to let the okra cook down with the broth and the roux, meldin' everything together into a cohesive dish."

He reached for the array of spices laid out on the counter, each one a crucial component in creating the rich, complex flavor profile that defined a good gumbo. As he added the cayenne, thyme, and bay leaves, the kitchen filled with a warm, spicy scent that seemed to wrap around them like a comforting embrace. The aroma was both familiar and inviting, evoking memories of home and hearth.

The gumbo began to take on that perfect color, the deepening hues and melding scents brought a smile to Will's face, a tangible connection to his past and the traditions he held dear. He remembered his father's rough hands expertly chopping vegetables, the familiar tune he'd hum under his breath as he stirred the pot. The smell of the gumbo simmering on the stove always brought a sense of warmth and security to their home, a sensory anchor in a world that often felt unstable. Standing there now, chopping vegetables and explaining the process to Hannibal, he felt a deep sense of continuity. It was as if he were honoring his dad's memory, carrying on a tradition that had always meant so much to him.

As they finished adding the last of the ingredients to the gumbo, the kitchen filled with the rich, enticing aromas of onions, bell peppers, celery, okra, and a hint of smoky sausage. He glanced at Hannibal, who was watching him with a mixture of admiration and curiosity. Will felt a surge of pride, not just in the culinary skills he was demonstrating but in the way he was able to share a piece of his past with someone he cared about.

Letting his Louisianan accent slip through felt like peeling back a layer he rarely let anyone see. It was a reflection of his times on boat docks with his dad throughout his childhood. Memories of his youth washed over him–his father and the other fishermen conversing in a harmonious blend of languages, the rhythm and warmth of their words as much a part of his upbringing as the bayou itself.

When he first moved to Wolf Trap, he had worked hard to drop his accent, wanting to leave that part of himself behind. The twang of his youth felt too raw, too exposed for the new life he was trying to build. He'd practiced speaking with a more neutral tone, smoothing out the edges of his voice until it matched the cool detachment he aimed for in his interactions.

Now, though, there was unexpected enjoyment in letting that old cadence resurface. He found himself eager for Hannibal to hear it, to share this deeply personal part of himself that he had kept hidden for so long. Speaking in that familiar rhythm was a way of laying bare his soul, inviting Hannibal to see him more completely.

As he stirred the pot, a thrill ran through Will as he wondered if Hannibal knew that he could speak Cajun French. The thought of revealing this hidden facet of himself, of surprising Hannibal, sent a shot of mischief through him. He allowed a small smirk to play on his lips as he spoke, watching intently for Hannibal's reaction.

"À c't'heure, on attend pendant qu'le gumbo mijote," Will said, his voice carrying a melodic cadence. *"Ça va prendre une heure, quoi qu'on devrait faire?"*

Will felt immensely smug, a wave of triumph washing over him as he saw Hannibal's eyes widen, genuine astonishment flashing across his features. "I was not aware you could speak Cajun French, Will." Beneath the astonishment in his tone, Will detected something darker and hungrier, a raw desire that sent a shiver down his spine.

The first pang of arousal hit Will at the look Hannibal was giving him, a mix of admiration and something more primal. "There's a lot you don't know about me, Dr. Lecter," he said coyly, lacing his playful tone with a slight challenge.

Hannibal stepped closer, the gleam of dark mischief in his eyes growing more pronounced. The warmth of his body, just inches away, made the air between them charged with a potent mix of affection and desire. *"Vilain garçon, Will,"* he murmured, his voice low and teasing.

Will's breath hitched slightly, his heart pounding in his chest. The closeness of Hannibal, the playful glint that danced in his eyes, and the way his words seemed to caress rather than speak stirred something deep within Will. A heat spread through him, the response immediate and instinctual.

Leaning further into Will's space, Hannibal's hand slid up to rest lightly on Will's shoulder. *"Que faut-il faire à ce sujet?"* he asked, his voice a silken purr.

Those words hung in the air like a spell, and Will's breath caught. The smooth, lyrical quality of Hannibal's French rolling over him, combined with the warmth of his hand, sent a wave of heat through Will's body. His pulse quickened, and he felt a flush creeping up his neck. Arousal sparked in his gut, growing more pronounced with each syllable that fell from Hannibal's lips.

"Well," Will began, his voice taking on a husky edge, "I s'pose we'll just have to see what happens, won't we?" He leaned in, their faces now only inches apart, the playful tension quickly turning more erotic. Hands found their way to his waist, pulling him closer,

goosebumps erupting underneath the electric touch. Hannibal's breath ghosted over Will's lips, warm and inviting, making him acutely aware of every heartbeat, every intake of breath.

All thoughts fled Will's mind, the domesticity of the scene clashing with the raw, primal desire he felt. As Hannibal's other hand slid up his back, fingers trailing lightly, Will felt a surge of affection and longing. He leaned into the touch, his own hands moving to rest on Hannibal's shoulders, squeezing gently. The connection between them was undeniable, a powerful force that drew them together, transcending words. He could feel the steady rise and fall of Hannibal's chest, their breaths synchronizing as if they were two parts of a whole.

"Indeed, we shall," Hannibal whispered, his voice a soft caress that sent shivers down Will's spine. They stood there, the world outside forgotten, wrapped in a moment of intimacy that felt both tender and electrifying. Hannibal's lips brushed against Will's ear, his breath warm and tantalizing.

Will's own breath hitched as Hannibal's lips trailed from his ear down to his neck, the soft, lingering kisses leaving a heated path along his skin. Hannibal's mouth moved with deliberate slowness, each kiss a promise, the gentle scrape of teeth against Will's jawline sending shivers down his spine. Will tilted his head, exposing more of his neck, inviting Hannibal to continue. His eyes fluttered closed, and he surrendered to the sensation, every nerve ending alive with anticipation.

The kisses grew bolder as Hannibal traveled back upwards, his lips brushing over the sensitive skin beneath Will's chin before finding his mouth. When their lips finally met, the kiss was deep and sensual. As their groans mingled, Hannibal's hands roamed with purpose, tracing the lines of Will's back, the pressure firm, his touch possessive. Will's fingers tangled in Hannibal's hair, tugging just enough to coax a low, feral growl from Hannibal's chest, the sound vibrating against Will's body.

The kiss deepened, became more urgent, their mouths clashing in a fervent dance of desire and need. Hannibal's tongue teased Will's, the demanding strokes sending jolts of heat coursing through Will's veins, and the taste of him–rich, intoxicating–fueled Will's need for more. He pressed closer, their bodies aligning perfectly, each curve and angle fitting together as if made for this moment. The air around them thickened, the kitchen's warmth a mere backdrop to the fire threatening to ignite between them.

Hannibal's dominance in this moment was electric, his every movement controlled and intentional. Will yielded to it, the thrill of relinquishing control to Hannibal sparking a deeper hunger within him. He clung to Hannibal, his hands sliding down to grip his waist, pulling impossibly closer.

Minutes stretched on, their kiss becoming more urgent, more desperate. Will's breath hitched as Hannibal's teeth grazed his lower lip, a sharp, tantalizing bite that made him gasp. Hannibal took the opportunity to delve deeper, their tongues tangling in a fierce dance. Will's heart pounded in his chest, each beat echoing the rhythm of their kiss.

Finally, Will broke the kiss, panting. He rested his forehead against Hannibal's, their breaths mingling, both of them momentarily lost in the aftermath of their shared desire. "We should

probably get back to the gumbo," Will said, his voice breathless but filled with laughter. "Can't let you ruin the first meal I've been in charge of."

Hannibal chuckled, the sound rich and warm. "Of course not," he replied, his voice a low murmur. He placed a final, lingering kiss on Will's lips before stepping back, his eyes still dark with desire but also shining with amusement. "Lead the way, Chef Graham."

The rest of the evening had unfolded in a comfortable rhythm, the kitchen filled with the rich aroma of their simmering gumbo. The dish had turned out perfectly, and they had savored the meal together, their conversation flowing as smoothly as the wine they poured. Later, they had retired to the living room, and Hannibal had read aloud once more, his voice a soothing backdrop as Will nestled into his side.

Now, as Will stood at the front of the lecture hall, his eyes glazing over as he scanned the sea of students, the memories of the weekend felt like a distant dream. He droned on about the intricacies of criminal profiling, his voice steady but devoid of enthusiasm. The room buzzed with the low hum of attentive whispers and the scratch of pens against paper. He mechanically recited information, each word slipping out without much thought, while his mind wandered to Hannibal–always Hannibal.

It was difficult being back at work after such a dramatic shift in their relationship. They had gone to the opera, declared their love for each other for the first time, and spent the rest of the weekend wrapped in domestic bliss. The warmth of those moments lingered in Will's mind, making the cold, impersonal atmosphere of the lecture hall feel even more distant and uninviting. Will found himself yearning for the comfort of Hannibal's presence, the way his touch grounded him and made everything else fade away.

The thought floated across his mind unbidden: *God, I don't want to keep doing this* . The work that had once filled Will with a sense of purpose now felt hollow, devoid of the fulfillment it once provided. His purpose had shifted, now centered on Hannibal, and the idea of anything more than that felt unnecessary, even burdensome. The notion of spending the rest of his life waking up next to Hannibal, free from the constant pressure and scrutiny of his current reality, was more than intoxicating–it was liberating.

But it wasn't just the peaceful domesticity he craved. There was a thrilling, dangerous edge to their shared becoming, a darkness they both indulged in with a sense of freedom that was as exhilarating as it was terrifying. The idea of leaving Jack, Alana, and the FBI behind no longer filled Will with dread but with a profound sense of release. He could envision a future where he and Hannibal were free to explore their shared passions, unencumbered by the constraints of his former life.

The thought of living without restraint, of diving headlong into the indulgence of their darkest desires, sent a shiver down his spine. Will yearned for a life where his days were filled with the simplicity and joy of being with Hannibal, combined with the raw, primal satisfaction of shared hunts. He didn't even hesitate to imagine hunting with Hannibal. The memory of killing Garret Jacob Hobbs–the rush of adrenaline, the visceral connection to the act–was still vivid in his mind. Now, he found himself eager to experience that again, but this time with Hannibal by his side, purposefully and with intent.

He could almost see it: quiet mornings turning into afternoons of meticulously planned escapades, the sensuality of their kills intertwined with the physical intimacy they shared. The thought of tracking a victim, the silent communication and understanding between him and Hannibal, was deeply arousing. Each step of the hunt would be a form of foreplay, building anticipation until the moment they struck.

Will could feel the imagined weight of a knife in his hand, the pulse of excitement as they closed in on their prey. The act of taking a life, of feeling the power and control that came with it, was an aphrodisiac in itself. And afterward, the intimacy would deepen–shared glances heavy with meaning, hands stained with blood intertwining as they cleaned up, and the intense, primal connection that would follow as they reveled in the aftermath.

The eroticism of their shared darkness was undeniable. The thought of Hannibal's hands guiding his, the two of them moving as one, was intoxicating. He could imagine the quickening of Hannibal's breath, the look in his eyes as they completed the act together. It was a heady mix of violence and passion, each element enhancing the other, binding them closer in ways that were both terrifying and exhilarating.

As the vivid fantasies began to blur with reality, Will felt a familiar yearning tug at him. The lecture hall's sterile environment contrasted sharply with the sensual and intense world he envisioned with Hannibal. With a sigh, Will forced himself to concentrate, pushing the memories and fantasies to the back of his mind. There would be time to explore those possibilities later, in the quiet of the evening, when he could once again lose himself in the memory of Hannibal's embrace and the tantalizing promise of their shared future. For now, he had a job to do, even if his heart wasn't entirely in it. But deep down, he knew that his heart had already made its choice, and the path to his future was becoming clearer with each passing day.

Suddenly, the heavy wooden door at the back of the room swung open with a loud bang, bringing Will firmly back into the present as Jack strode in, his presence a thundercloud of authority and barely contained fury. The room fell silent, all eyes turning to the imposing figure who now commanded their attention. Jack's glare swept over the students, his expression brooking no argument.

"Class dismissed," Jack barked, his voice echoing off the walls. "Everyone, out." The students exchanged confused glances, hesitating only a moment before scrambling to gather their belongings and file out of the room.

Will's heart skipped a beat. Jack's demeanor was far more intense than usual, even for a crime scene. A knot of anxiety tightened in his stomach as his mind raced. *Has something happened with Hannibal?* The thought of the Ripper flashed through his mind, sending a shiver down his spine. They had agreed not to kill the rude man from the bar–at least, not yet–but Will couldn't be sure Hannibal hadn't acted on his own. He had to get a handle on this quickly.

As the last of the students hurried out, leaving the room eerily silent, Jack advanced toward Will's desk with purposeful strides. Will could see the barely contained fury in the tension of Jack's jaw, the way his hands clenched into fists at his sides. Before Will could fully process

his mounting dread, Jack threw a newspaper down on the desk with a force that made the wooden surface tremble.

“What the hell is that?” Jack demanded, his voice a low growl that resonated with barely suppressed rage.

Will stared at the newspaper, genuinely perplexed. He looked up at Jack, his brow furrowing in confusion. “What is… what, Jack?” Will asked, his voice cautious as he felt a cold sweat forming at the nape of his neck.

Jack’s eyes blazed with intensity as he pointed a thick finger at the newspaper, jabbing at it with barely restrained anger. The headline on the society page of the Baltimore Sun caught Will’s eye, and his heart sank even as a surge of possessive pleasure coursed through him. He saw the half-page spread dedicated to Dr. Hannibal Lecter and Mr. William Graham.

Will was tucked snugly into Hannibal’s side, their bodies pressed close in a way that was far too intimate for polite company. Hannibal’s arm was draped possessively around Will’s shoulders, his hand resting lightly on Will’s arm. They were both dressed impeccably, but it was the way they looked at each other that drew the most attention.

Hannibal’s eyes, usually so guarded and calculating, were softened with a rare tenderness as he gazed down at Will. There was unmistakable affection and pride in his gaze, as if Will were the most precious thing in the world to him. Will, in turn, looked up at Hannibal with a similarly softened expression, his blue eyes filled with a mix of adoration and contentment. Their faces were close, almost touching, and the corners of Will’s mouth were curved in a small, genuine smile that spoke volumes about his feelings.

Will remembered the photo being taken but hadn’t thought much of it at the time. Now, seeing it through Jack’s furious eyes, he couldn’t help but feel a mix of amusement and fond exasperation. *Of course* , he thought with a wry smirk, *a damning photo of us would be splashed across the society pages.* Hannibal likely known this would happen–had probably orchestrated the entire thing–and had conveniently forgotten to mention it. Typical Hannibal.

The sight of them so publicly displayed together stirred something deep within him, a possessive pride that simmered beneath the surface. Hannibal was his, in every way that mattered, and seeing them captured so intimately only heightened the sense of ownership he felt. He could almost feel the phantom eyes of those who had seen the photo, their curiosity, their envy. And despite the seriousness of the situation, Will couldn’t help but internally preen at the thought.

But he knew he needed to quash that feeling, to tamp down on the surge of pride and focus on the task at hand. There would be time later to indulge in the knowledge that Hannibal was his, and that the world, or at least those who mattered, was beginning to see it too. Right now, he needed to control the narrative, to steer Jack away from the truth without arousing further suspicion. The stakes were high, and Will had to play his cards perfectly. *Here we go* .

“Jack, I told you I was going to the opera with Hannibal,” Will reminded him, his tone calm and measured. He met Jack’s furious gaze steadily, knowing that the best way to defuse this situation was to maintain an air of control and honesty. Jack had assumed the outing was

professional, but Will needed him to voice that assumption explicitly. It was essential to make Jack articulate his thoughts, to expose the gaps in his understanding.

Jack's face turned a dangerous shade of red, veins throbbing at his temples. He looked like he was on the verge of an aneurysm. "I didn't sign off on a romantic date with Hannibal Lecter. If I'd known, I would've said no!" Jack's voice rose with each word, the fury barely contained.

Will felt a rush of vindication seeing Jack so off balance and emotional. *It's about time* , he thought. This was payback for the time he'd spent in the BSHCI, underneath Chilton's thumb, screaming the truth only to be met with Jack's disbelief. Back then, it had been Will who was vulnerable, who had been pushed to the brink, teetering on the edge of madness while Jack–and everyone else–had remained deaf to his pleas. But now, the tables had turned. Jack was the one off kilter, teetering on the edge of an emotional precipice, just as Will had been.

This was where he needed him, vulnerable and reactive. He could work with this, guide Jack to the conclusion he needed him to reach. Will kept his expression neutral, though his mind was racing, calculating each step carefully. Every word, every glance had to be precise, had to lead Jack down the path Will wanted him to take, without giving anything away.

"Jack, I don't know what you want me to say. I went to the opera with him. Someone took our picture." Technically true, but leaving out the part where Hannibal had likely been hoping for this exact outcome. Regardless, Will's body language was deliberately controlled, projecting a mix of frustration and resignation. He could feel the weight of Jack's stare, the heat of his anger searing into him. But he stood firm, letting a sigh escape his lips as if he were exasperated by the entire situation. His shoulders slumped slightly, a picture of a man worn down by circumstances beyond his control.

The silence between them grew suffocating as Jack's eyes bored into Will's, searching for any sign of deceit. Will knew that he wouldn't find any. The faint ticking of the clock on the wall felt like a hammer striking with excruciating slowness, each tick echoing in the empty lecture hall. Will needed to keep Jack off balance, to make him doubt his assumptions, so he fought the urge to fill the void with words. He knew that he could let the silence work for him, to let it grind down Jack's resolve until doubt crept in like a slow, relentless tide.

Jack's glare intensified, his jaw clenching tightly, a muscle twitching in his cheek before he broke the charged atmosphere with a sharp intake of breath. He straightened, crossing his arms over his chest as if bracing himself. "You have to see how this looks," he said, his voice edged with frustration. He glanced away for a moment, as if searching for the right words, before locking eyes with Will again. "Dr. Bloom has already come to me about her suspicions surrounding your motivations for resuming therapy with Dr. Lecter." His tone held a note of accusation, his brow furrowing deeper.

Irritation flared in Will at the mention of Alana. A faint pulse of tension throbbed at his temple, the only outward sign of the annoyance that simmered just beneath the surface. *Typical Alana, always running to Jack for validation,* he thought bitterly, the exasperation prickling at his composure. He swallowed hard, pushing the frustration down, and refocused

his thoughts, knowing he needed to keep his emotions in check and focus on the task at hand: steering Jack away from the dangerous truth.

“And you’ve been telling me he's the Ripper for how long?” Jack questioned, taking Will’s silence as permission to continue. “Now you’re cozying up with him in public. It’s confusing as hell, Will.” Jack’s frustration was tangible, radiating from him like heat. His posture was rigid, muscles taut with barely restrained anger.

Will could see the strain in Jack’s face, the tightness around his eyes, the way his jaw clenched with every word. Jack’s voice dropped, but the intensity didn’t waver; if anything, it became more dangerous, more personal. His eyes bore into Will’s, a silent demand for answers, for some sort of explanation that would make sense of the chaos. “We can’t afford to have anyone looking too closely at what we’re doing. If Alana notices something is off, it won’t be long until higher-ups like Kade Prurnell begin asking questions I don’t want to answer.”

The words hung heavily in the air, each one a sharp reminder of the precarious position they were in. His glance at Will was meaningful, a silent warning of the consequences they both faced. “We’re in this together, whether you like it or not. So you better get your head on straight and think about what you’re doing. Because if this blows up, we’re both screwed.”

Gotcha. Will sensed the opening–Jack’s fear of exposure. He could use this, spin it to his advantage, but he knew he needed to tread carefully, to guide Jack without pushing too hard. Jack was like a wary fish, suspicious and ready to bolt at any moment. Will needed to be the skillful fisherman, coaxing Jack to bite, to believe the story he was about to spin. The wrong move could send Jack spiraling, but the right one could steer him exactly where Will needed him to go.

Taking a measured breath, Will softened his tone, letting just the right amount of contrition seep into his words. “I get how this looks. I’m not perfect, Jack. I mess up.” The confession was calculated, designed to disarm, to show a hint of weakness that Jack could latch onto. He paused, letting the weight of his words hang in the air, giving Jack a moment to absorb them. “You should know that better than anyone.”

The subtle reminder of their history, of Jack’s own missteps in trusting Will, was a carefully placed barb. It was just enough to make Jack hesitate, to second-guess his own doubts. *There it is* , Will saw it in Jack’s eyes–a glimpse of uncertainty beneath his guilt. Seizing the moment, Will continued, “I get Alana’s concerns, your concerns. But we both know how important it is to maintain the facade. I need you to trust me, Jack, like I’ve trusted you.”

Will watched closely, catching the almost imperceptible shift in Jack’s posture–the faint easing of tension in his shoulders, the way his clenched fists loosened just slightly at his sides. He could see the subtle signs of his words landing, the growing crack in Jack’s hardened exterior.

Jack’s eyes, still sharp with frustration, lost some of their edge, the anger dimming into something closer to reluctant acceptance. “We can’t afford mistakes, Will. Not now.”

“I know,” Will replied, his voice steady. “But we can’t afford mistrust either.”

He watched as a flicker of uncertainty crossed Jack's face–the small crease in his brow, the slight downturn of his mouth. Jack wanted to believe in their partnership, in Will's ability to see things others couldn't. Will could feel that hesitance, the part of Jack that was still holding on to the idea that they were on the same side. He needed to tap into that, to draw Jack back into his corner.

Each word Will spoke was calculated. "Jack, I've been spending a lot of time with Hannibal, getting close, observing him. He's shown me sides of himself that don't fit the profile of the Chesapeake Ripper. The man I've seen, especially after the opera, doesn't match up."

Jack's brow furrowed deeper, a blend of doubt and intrigue playing in his eyes. "What are you saying, Will?" His voice had lost some of its earlier sharpness, softened by the lure of Will's words. The seed of doubt had been planted, and now Will just had to nurture it.

Leaning in slightling, sensing the shift, Will kept his voice low, earnest. "Hannibal is cultured, empathetic in ways that are genuine. The way he engages with me, the way he was at the opera… it's not just an act. I've seen him in moments of vulnerability, moments that don't align with the cold, calculating nature of the Ripper." He knew he was walking a fine line, but the more he humanized Hannibal, the more he chipped away at Jack's certainty.

Will realized that he might have pushed too far, said the wrong thing, as Jack's eyes narrowed, his skepticism hardened instead of softening. "That's not what you were saying when you were locked up in the BSHCI!" Jack's words echoed in the lecture hall, reverberating off the walls and amplifying the tension.

A genuine surge of irritation burned through Will as he tried to get the conversation back on track, raising his voice and matching Jack's intensity. "I was *wrong* , Jack!" The words came out forceful, unrestrained, as if the pressure he had been holding back finally erupted. In that instant, his control slipped, the frustration of the situation spilling over. As soon as the words left his mouth, Will could feel the weight of his outburst hang in the air, thick and oppressive. He saw Jack's eyes widen in surprise, the force of Will's emotion catching him off guard. The room seemed to close in around them, the tension a tangible force pressing down on both of them.

Will's heart pounded in his chest, each beat a reminder of the precarious position he was in. He needed to regain control, to reel his emotions back in before they derailed his carefully laid plans. He took a slow, steadying breath, feeling the cool air fill his lungs and bring a measure of calm.

"Jack," he continued, his tone softer now, more controlled as he took a step forward. "I was desperate and confused. Everything was falling apart." He paused, his eyes narrowing slightly as he gave Jack a look that conveyed the unspoken truth– *nobody could argue with that* . The weight of those days still hung heavy between them. "I needed someone to blame, and Hannibal was there."

Jack's eyes narrowed, skepticism tightening the lines around his mouth. His gaze hardened, scrutinizing Will as if searching for weak spots in his story. "So you're saying all this time, it's been for nothing? That Hannibal isn't who we thought he was? You expect me to just

forget everything you've said before? All the warnings, the evidence pointing to him? This isn't some fairy tale where the villain suddenly turns out to be the hero."

The intensity in Jack's eyes told Will that he was hitting a wall of stubborn resistance. Jack's pursuit of the Ripper had become far more than a case; it was a personal crusade. The Ripper was Jack's white whale, the elusive target he had been chasing for so long.

Sensing an opportunity, Will decided to push further, his voice taking on a sharper edge. "You're so focused on catching the Ripper that you're ignoring the evidence right in front of you," Will pressed, his voice tinged with urgency. "Hannibal doesn't fit the profile. You're letting your obsession cloud your judgment."

Jack's frustration was still evident but now mixed with a hint of uncertainty. "So you're saying I'm obsessed?" His tone made it clear that he was voicing a statement, not a question. "That I can't see clearly because of this?"

Will nodded, leaning in further, his eyes locking onto Jack's once more. "Yes, Jack. I think you want to catch the Ripper so badly that you're willing to overlook the possibility that Hannibal isn't the man we're looking for. We have to consider the evidence objectively. If we don't, we risk ruining innocent lives."

He paused, letting his words sink in before continuing, his tone shifting to one of feigned concern. "And Jack, don't you want to be at home, spending time with your wife before she's gone? Bella needs you, and these endless pursuits… they're taking you away from her. From precious moments you might never get back."

As Will held Jack's gaze, the other man's face contorted with a mix of anger and pain. The reminder of Bella's condition was a knife twist, cloaked in the guise of concern, and Will could see the impact it had. Will took a deep breath, softening his tone. "Look, I'm not saying Hannibal is innocent. I'm saying we need to be sure before we make any moves. If we're wrong about him, we could be letting the real Ripper slip through our fingers. We can't afford to make that mistake."

Shoulders slumping, Jack's hand rubbed the back of his neck, the tension easing just enough to reveal his inner conflict. "You have to understand how hard this is for me to believe. You were so sure, Will. And now…" He shook his head, his voice trailing off as he struggled to find the right words. The weight of the situation was evident in the lines etched deeply into his face, the fatigue in his eyes.

Seizing the moment, his tone shifting to one of earnestness, Will pleaded, "I know it's hard to believe. But I need you to trust me now. I'm doing my best to find the truth, even if it means admitting I was wrong." He took a careful step closer, his gaze steady and imploring. He needed Jack to see the sincerity in his eyes, to feel the desperation in his words.

Jack's hardened expression softened, the lines of anger and suspicion blurring as he let out a long breath. "Alright, Will. But this doesn't mean I'm letting my guard down. We still need to be careful." His voice was firm, but there was a hint of resignation, a reluctant acceptance of the possibility that Will might be telling the truth.

Will allowed a small, weary smile to touch his lips, relief suffusing his veins. “I wouldn’t expect anything less.” The words were sincere, laced with a quiet gratitude. “Thank you for trusting me.”

The room felt lighter, the oppressive weight of the confrontation lifting just a bit. Will watched as Jack’s posture relaxed further, the rigid lines of his body softening. He knew this wasn’t over, but it was a step in the right direction. He had managed to plant enough doubt to keep Jack off balance, to buy himself some time.

Glancing down at the newspaper on the desk one last time, Jack’s jaw tightened as he swiped the newspaper and took a step back. The intensity in his eyes dimmed, replaced by a steely resolve. He cleared his throat, the sound breaking the charged silence that had settled over the room. “Alright, we’ll table this for now.” His tone was brisk, businesslike, as if he were shelving his emotions along with the conversation.

Jack straightened his jacket, his demeanor shifting back to that of the efficient, no-nonsense head of Behavioral Sciences. “We need you in the lab,” he said, his voice clipped and professional. “New case. I’ll brief the team there.”

Sensing the abrupt shift in Jack’s focus, Will nodded. The man’s ability to compartmentalize never ceased to amaze him. Jack was shelving their conversation, locking it away behind a door in his mind until it was needed again. Will could almost see the gears turning, the mental filing cabinet closing with a decisive click.

As Jack turned to leave, the tension in the room seemed to dissipate further, replaced by the more familiar atmosphere of procedural urgency. Will watched him go, the steady click of Jack’s shoes echoing in the now-empty lecture hall. He took a deep breath, allowing himself a moment to gather his thoughts before following.

Will followed Jack down the corridor to the lab, the echo of their footsteps the only sound in the otherwise silent hallway. Jack’s back was rigid, his posture still radiating the tension of their earlier confrontation. Will trailed behind, feeling a residual mix of anxiety and determination simmering within him. He knew he had managed to deflect Jack’s suspicion for now, but the encounter had left him unsettled.

As they entered the lab, the bustling activity provided a welcome contrast to the oppressive silence of the lecture hall. The room was a hive of activity: Jimmy and Brian were hunched over microscopes, meticulously analyzing evidence. The two men were engaged in their usual banter, voices rising and falling with the rhythm of their friendly bickering.

Jimmy glanced up from his work, huffing in faux irritation. “Brian, if you contaminate another sample with your so-called ‘sterile’ technique, I swear I’m going to confiscate your coffee privileges.”

Brian shot him an exasperated look, his brow furrowing in mock annoyance. “Oh please, Jimmy. Your lab technique is so old school, I’m surprised you don’t use a quill and parchment. Besides, my coffee is the only thing keeping me sane.”

Jimmy rolled his eyes, but there was a twinkle of amusement in them. “Well, your ‘sanity’ is currently jeopardizing my results. So maybe lay off the caffeine for a bit, hmm?”

Alana, standing at a table with her brow furrowed as she pored over a thick case file, looked up and shook her head with a small smile.

The conversations halted as Jack’s presence commanded immediate attention. He strode purposefully to the center of the room, his expression stern. “Alright, everyone, gather around,” he called out, his voice cutting through the noise. The team assembled quickly, falling into place around a large table that was covered with maps and case files.

“We’ve been asked to consult on a series of murders out of state,” Jack began, his tone all business. “Bodies have been dropped in various locations, and the local PD is out of their depth. They’ve sent over what they have, and it’s up to us to put the pieces together.”

As Jack spoke, Will found his attention drifting. The earlier confrontation still weighed heavily on his mind, but the image of the newspaper photo lingered with a potent mix of emotions. He felt a surge of possessive pleasure at being so publicly linked to Hannibal, a thrill that was hard to suppress. Even knowing it tipped Jack’s suspicions, Will couldn’t quite bring himself to regret it. Although, he knew he’d have to give Hannibal some grief for orchestrating the photo’s appearance in the paper. There was no way Hannibal didn’t know that picture would end up there. He probably enjoyed every second of it.

Jack continued, outlining the basic details of the case: the victims, the method of killing, and the locations where the bodies had been found. Will caught snippets of the information, his mind returning back to the present in bursts. He noted the grim details, the clinical detachment in Jack’s voice, but his thoughts kept straying back to Hannibal and the precarious dance they were engaged in.

“We’re on a tight schedule, so let’s get to work,” Jack concluded, his gaze sweeping over the assembled team with determination. There was a collective murmur of acknowledgement, the team dispersing to their respective tasks with practiced efficiency.

Will took a deep breath, grounding himself in the present. The lab was a familiar environment, its structured chaos a welcome distraction from the turmoil in his mind. He could feel the weight of the new case settling on his shoulders, a reminder of the dual roles he was juggling. He let his fingers drum lightly on the edge of the table, a small, silent rhythm to center his thoughts. This was his domain, where he excelled, and he needed to focus.

As Jack concluded the briefing, Will found his focus sharpening just in time to catch the last details. He felt a sense of relief that he could now immerse himself in the case at hand, but that reprieve was short-lived.

Across the room, Brian Zeller’s voice cut through the lingering tension. “Uh, guys? Check this out.” Zeller’s tone held a mix of surprise and amusement as he pointed to the newspaper Jack had thrown on a nearby counter.

Jimmy Price leaned over Zeller’s shoulder, his eyes widening as he took in the photo. “No way! Will and Dr. Lecter at the opera? Looking cozy!”

Price, grinning widely, picked up the newspaper and waved it at Will. “Will, you dog! What’s this all about?”

Will’s cheeks flushed slightly as he tried to play it cool, the earlier confrontation with Jack still fresh in his mind. “It’s not what it looks like,” he said, attempting to keep his tone even and dismissive.

Price laughed, a hearty sound that echoed in the lab. “Sure, sure. Just two friends sharing an intimate… everything, right?”

Zeller, half-teasing, half-serious, added, “Yeah, I mean, who knew you had it in you? And with Dr. Lecter, of all people!”

Will felt a surge of both irritation and embarrassment. He could see the amused curiosity in their eyes, the way they exchanged glances as if they had uncovered some juicy piece of gossip. He tried to focus on the case files spread out on the table, but the image of the photo and the implications it carried gnawed at him.

Alana, who had been focused on the case files, finally looked up and saw the newspaper. Her face paled as she processed Price and Zeller’s teasing, on top of seeing the image. She stared at the photo for a moment, her expression a mix of shock, hurt, and barely contained anger.

“Will, can I speak to you outside?” Alana asked, her voice tight with controlled fury.

Jack looked confused but nodded. “Go ahead. We’ll catch you up when you’re done.”

Will followed Alana out of the lab, his mind spooling out to calculate the possible outcomes of this confrontation. The hallway was empty, unnervingly quiet as their footsteps echoed off the walls, and the fluorescent lights overhead buzzed faintly, casting a cold, clinical glare on the polished tiles below. Once they were a safe distance from the lab, Alana rounded on Will, her eyes blazing.

“What is this, Will?” Her voice sliced through the charged air, sharp and unforgiving.

Jesus, this is Jack all over again. He met her gaze, his expression smooth and composed, a mask of innocence firmly in place. “What are you talking about, Alana?” His tone was light, bordering on dismissive, as if her outburst was unwarranted. Gratification curled deep in his chest, a quiet simmering pleasure. He knew exactly what she had seen.

Alana’s hand shook slightly as she thrust the newspaper at him, her knuckles white with the force of her grip. “This! You and Hannibal, looking like… like that!”

Allowing his eyes to drift to the photo, Will felt a flash of possessive triumph in his chest. The sight of them together, so publicly intertwined, felt like a vicious victory. “It’s not what it looks like,” he replied, keeping his voice measured, though a hint of irritation crept in at the edges. Masking the triumph of seeing Alana’s hurt and anger was a challenge, but he managed.

Alana's eyes narrowed to slits, her jaw tightening as if she was holding back a flood of words. "Don't lie to me, Will. What kind of game are you playing?"

"Game? There's no game, Alana," Will responded, deceptively calm. He could feel a flicker of amusement rising within him, threatening to break through his composed exterior. The absurdity of her accusation tickled him, the corners of his mouth twitching as he fought back a smirk. It was almost comical, really–her thinking he was the mastermind here, the puppet master pulling the strings. The real irony was that Hannibal, the true architect of deception, was seen as the angel in her eyes. The thought of it almost made him chuckle.

Her anger, her confusion, the way she struggled to fit the pieces together only made Will's amusement grow. It was like watching someone try to solve a puzzle with missing pieces, unaware that the person who had hidden them was standing right beside them, smiling innocently. The satisfaction that welled up inside him was undeniable, fueling a fire that made it hard to keep his expression neutral.

Alana's voice rose, her emotions bubbling over. "Do you expect me to believe that?" She took a step forward, her fingers curling into fists at her sides. "Will, you tried to have him killed!" The words seemed to hang in the air, heavy with accusation. She took a shaky breath, her eyes glistening with a mix of anger and hurt. "And now you're photographed at the opera–the opera!–together?"

Will let out a slow breath, considering his words. He relished the power he felt in this moment, the ability to twist the knife just enough. "He had an extra ticket to the opera," he said slowly, savoring the frustration in her eyes. "He invited me, and I accepted." The simplicity of his answer was a deliberate slight, a way to downplay the significance of the event while knowing it would drive her mad.

Alana's eyes blazed with a mixture of disbelief and fury, her breath coming in short, sharp bursts. "Why would Hannibal invite the man who accused him of being a serial killer, the man who tried to have him murdered, on a *date* ?" She spat the word with venom. "Are you seriously expecting me to believe that he's forgiven you just like that?"

Will's expression stayed composed, though he could feel the irritation simmering just beneath the surface. He took a breath, deliberately softening his tone as if peeling back layers to reveal vulnerability. "Alana," he began, his voice carrying a weight of sincerity, "you know I was sick back then." He let the words hang in the air for a moment, allowing the gravity of his condition to settle between them. His eyes met hers, a flicker of something genuine in their depths. "My brain was on fire–I was seeing things, losing time, completely unable to trust my own mind."

He paused, subtly watching her reaction, measuring each breath she took as if gauging how deeply his words were sinking in. "I lashed out at the person closest to me–Hannibal. I was confused, paranoid, desperate," he continued, his voice laced with a quiet, almost broken honesty. Will took a step closer, his eyes searching hers, as though he was laying himself bare for her to see. "It wasn't real, Alana. None of it was real."

She stared at him, her face a conflicted mixture of anger and confusion, the emotions warring just beneath the surface. "And that makes it all okay?" she snapped, her voice sharp and

unforgiving. “You tried to destroy him, Will. How can he just let that go?”

Her righteous indignation clung to her like armor, and it was almost amusing how predictable she was in her self-righteousness. He could see that she wasn’t going to be easily placated, that her anger ran deeper than he’d anticipated. Any pretense of gentle persuasion dropped away, replaced by something sharper. “He understands, Alana,” he replied smoothly, voice dripping with smugness. “Hannibal doesn’t hold any of that against me, so why should you?”

Alana’s jaw tightened, hurt and anger flashing in her eyes. Predictable, so easy to rile up. Will felt the gratification curl deeper inside him, knowing he had hit a nerve. He stepped closer, his tone mocking. “Or maybe this isn’t about what I did. Maybe you’re just jealous, Alana?” He knew it was a cheap shot, but it was effective, and in that moment, he didn’t care. He wanted to see her react.

Her eyes widened, the shock of his words hitting her like a physical blow. She stepped back, fists clenching so tightly at her sides that her knuckles were once again white. “Jealous?” she repeated, her voice trembling, caught between disbelief and a simmering rage. “You think I’m jealous of you?”

Will’s smile was cold and satisfied. Of course she was jealous. “It makes sense, doesn’t it?” he pressed, his tone like ice. “You’re angry because Hannibal chose me over you. Because he sees something in me that he didn’t see in you.”

The jab found its mark. He could practically see the wheels turning in her head, trying to make sense of a reality she couldn’t accept, as her eyes widened, and she sputtered, her mouth opening and closing as she struggled to form a coherent response. “That’s not… You’re twisting this, Will!” Her voice wavered, the anger giving way to a deeper hurt.

Will’s gaze sharpened as he leaned in slightly, his voice dropping to a mocking whisper. “I know you’ve already gone to Jack with your concerns about me. Behind my back, no less. And what happened? He dismissed you, didn’t he?” He chuckled softly, the sound devoid of warmth. “So tell me, Alana, what’s left?”

She opened her mouth, readying a retort, but the words faltered, caught somewhere between her thoughts and her lips. Will could see the shift in her expression the way her eyes momentarily lost focus as her mind replayed past events. He could practically feel the tension as she remembered the phone call–the strained tone in Hannibal’s voice when she had asked if he was okay because he sounded off, the way she had asked if there was someone else, the moan Will had hoped she could hear. The memory hung between them, heavy and unspoken. Will watched as her eyes slowly widened, her face paling as the pieces began to align in her mind. He could almost see the exact moment when the realization struck.

Gasping, Alana skittered back from Will. “He broke up with me because of you,” she said, her voice low and filled with a painful clarity. “You were with him.” It wasn’t a question; it was a statement of fact.

Will met her glare, a hint of a smirk growing. “He made his own choices, Alana. I didn’t force his hand.” He felt a thrill at the half-truth, the power of it buzzing just beneath his skin. He wished he could tell Alana the whole truth–that Hannibal had broken up with her while

his cock was buried in Will's throat, his hands tangled in Will's hair, barely able to stifle his moans. The image of her face contorting in shock and horror was almost too delicious to resist. But he suppressed the urge, knowing that even this half-truth was enough to unsettle her. It was enough to know that she understood, on some level, that Hannibal preferred him.

Her eyes widened, her lips trembling with barely contained fury. "You're twisting everything, Will. This isn't about choices, it's about manipulation."

"Manipulation? Or maybe Hannibal just realized what he truly wanted." Will's smirk deepened as he watched her struggle with his insinuation. She had always underestimated his connection with Hannibal, thinking it was something she could interfere with. But she was wrong, and now she was paying the price for her naivety.

Eyes narrowing further, Alana's voice filled with bitterness, each word dripping with accusation. "Hannibal has always had a bit of a blind spot where you're concerned, Will. I don't know why, but it's there."

Irritation flashed through Will. Of course she'd reduce their relationship to a blind spot, a flaw in Hannibal's otherwise impeccable judgment. She couldn't fathom the depth of their connection, the way they complemented each other in ways she never could. He wanted to laugh at her ignorance but held back, knowing the power lay in remaining unruffled.

Her gaze piercing, Alana paused. "Somebody should have his best interests in mind."

She really thinks she could protect Hannibal? The idea was absurd. A derisive smile turned Will's tone mocking. "And you think Hannibal isn't capable of knowing what's best for himself? That he needs someone like you to protect him?" He leaned in slightly, enjoying the way her discomfort grew. "And I suppose what's best for Hannibal is you?"

Taken aback by the venom in Will's voice, Alana sputtered, "That's not what I–"

He cut her off, pressing his advantage. "Hannibal is fully capable of making his own decisions, Alana. He doesn't need you, or anyone else, telling him what he should or shouldn't do." He paused, letting his words sink in before continuing. "If you have a problem with that, maybe you should speak to Hannibal about it yourself. I mean, you respect his judgment more than mine, don't you?" He let the suggestion hang in the air, knowing that the prospect of confronting Hannibal face-to-face would unbalance her further.

Alana's eyes narrowed, her mouth set in a determined line. "Maybe I will," she shot back, though there was a hint of hesitation in her voice.

Will gave her a small, almost condescending smile. "Good. I'm sure he'd appreciate hearing your concerns directly," he said, his tone dripping with false encouragement. "And who knows, you might find out something new." His gaze was steady, challenging, daring her to take the bait.

For a moment, silence hung between them, heavy with the implications of his words. Will watched as Alana's expression wavered, the weight of what he had just said sinking in. He could see the conflict playing out in her eyes–the anger, the confusion, the hurt.

Finally, Alana's voice broke the tension, trembling with a mix of emotions. "I don't know you anymore, Will," she said, face twisting in disbelief as her voice trembled with a mix of confusion and hurt. "I don't recognize the man I once knew." Will held her gaze as she scanned his eyes for any sign of the person she used to care about.

A flash of triumph threatened the corners of Will's mouth as he watched Alana's reaction. The way her eyes widened, the subtle tremor in her lips–her confusion and hurt were almost too easy to provoke. "People change, Alana," his voice measured, detached, "Maybe it's time you realized that."

Alana's gaze hardened, her eyes flinty. When she spoke, her voice was barely audible, laced with a trembling edge of fear. "You've become something… someone I don't understand. And it terrifies me."

Will's smile was cold, his tone dismissive. He relished the power he had in this moment, the way he could unsettle her so deeply. "It doesn't matter what you think, Alana," he said, each word clipped and dismissive. "Hannibal sees me for who I am. He understands me in ways you never could. And," his tone shifted, taking on a taunting edge as he leaned in slightly, "Hannibal doesn't think I'm unstable." Will threw Alana's own words back at her, the accusation she once used to distance herself from him now serving as a twisted reminder of what Will and Hannibal meant to one another.

"You–" she started, her voice faltering as she struggled to find the words. The anger that had been simmering beneath the surface boiled over, contorting her features with a mix of fury and hurt. "You're using my own words against me?" she asked, incredulity and pain lacing every syllable.

Will didn't respond immediately, watching her with a cold detachment that only deepened the growing chasm between them.

"Is that what this is now?" she continued, her voice trembling. "Twisting the knife, just to prove a point?" There was a rawness in her tone, a pleading undercurrent that betrayed how deeply his words had cut.

But Will only smiled, a small, tight curve of his lips that carried no warmth. "I'm just reminding you of the facts, Alana," he said, his voice low and unyielding.

Alana's breath came in shallow bursts, her eyes glassy with unshed tears. She looked at him as though he were a stranger, someone she no longer recognized. "Are you sure about that, Will?" The tears were clearly making it difficult for her to speak. "Or are you just telling yourself that to feel better about what you've become?"

Will's gaze hardened, his patience wearing thin. He was done with her sanctimonious attitude. "Hannibal knows exactly who I am and what I'm capable of. And he accepts me. Can you say the same about yourself?"

Before Alana could respond, Jack stepped into the hallway, his presence instantly diffusing some of the tension. "Everything okay out here?" he asked, his tone neutral but his eyes sharp, taking in the scene with a quick, assessing glance.

Will nodded, straightening up and adopting a more composed demeanor. “Just clearing a few things up.”

Alana, still glaring at Will, added with a pointed edge, “Yeah, everything’s crystal clear.”

Jack’s gaze flicked between them, sensing the unresolved tension but choosing not to address it directly. “Alright, let’s get back to it then.”

As they walked back into the lab, the changed atmosphere followed them. The rest of the team, immersed in their work, pretended not to notice the lingering tension. Will could feel their eyes on him, a mixture of curiosity and unease.

Jack took up his usual place in front of the team, his voice cutting through the strained silence. “Let’s get to work.”

As Will tried to focus on the case details, a pang of regret surfaced in his mind. He and Alana had once been friends, sharing a camaraderie that now felt like a distant memory. Despite everything that had happened, he couldn’t entirely dismiss the loss of that friendship. Alana had been someone he trusted, someone who had seen him beyond his exterior. But as the regret surfaced, it was quickly drowned out by a deeper, more primal contentment.

The thought of Alana seeing him for who he truly was in Hannibal’s life, and vice versa, was exhilarating. Hannibal belonged to *him* , and the fact that Alana was beginning to comprehend that truth only heightened his sense of triumph. The regret over their fractured friendship was there, but it was overshadowed by the knowledge that he had something with Hannibal that was uniquely theirs, untouchable and profound. The arousal he felt at this realization was subtle but undeniable, fueling his focus and sharpening his sense of purpose.

As he sat in the lab, the hum of the fluorescent lights blending with the murmur of his colleagues’ voices, Will could feel the heat building within him, the possessive satisfaction making his skin tingle. His thoughts drifted to Hannibal, to the photograph that had set this all in motion. Will surreptitiously pulled out his phone, and he typed quickly, his fingers flying over the screen.

[3:42pm] Nice stunt with the photograph, Dr. Lecter.

[3:42pm] Really subtle. Not drawing any attention at all.

After quickly checking that his phone was set to vibrate, Will put his phone down and reached for another case file, trying to focus on the gruesome details before him. The immediacy of Hannibal’s response interrupted his thoughts.

[3:43pm] *I don’t know what you could possibly be referring to, Will.*

Will scoffed under his breath. *Sure you don’t*, Will thought with an eye roll. Jimmy glanced over at him with a questioning look, and Will just shook his head and waved him off, dismissing it as nothing. Hannibal playing dumb. Typical. Will knew better than to be surprised by Hannibal’s feigned innocence. Once Will was sure nobody was paying him undue attention, he returned to his phone.

[3:46pm] Oh, come on. The whole team has seen it.

[3:47pm] Pretty sure that's exactly what you intended.

He sent the texts, flipping through a couple pages of the case file before his phone buzzed again.

[3:52pm] *Darling, I believe you are the one who expressed a desire for a more public claiming, did you not?*

A blush crept up Will's face, the warmth spreading across his cheeks. Hannibal wasn't wrong. The man always managed to see right through him, stripping away his defenses with ease. His subtle arousal from earlier reignited, a low simmering heat pooling in his belly. But still, he couldn't let Hannibal get away with this unchallenged.

[3:54pm] Hiding behind the letter of the law, are we?

[3:55pm] *Indulge me Will. How did our dear Alana and Uncle Jack react?*

A shame you couldn't be here to see for yourself. Will found himself rolling his eyes once more at how exactly unsubtle Hannibal could be. There was a certain audacity to Hannibal's manipulations that was both infuriating and exhilarating. Hannibal certainly enjoyed flaunting his cunning, reveling in the chaos he could create with a single, well-placed move. He was likely put out that he couldn't see their reactions in person.

[3:56pm] I really shouldn't be rewarding bad behavior but

[3:56pm] Alana is furious, hurt

[3:56pm] Jack is suspicious

[3:57pm] You know, the usual

Will watched as the three dots indicating Hannibal was typing appeared, and then his phone buzzed again.

[3:58pm] *I have every confidence that you were able to assuage their concerns. I do know how well you are able to perform when called upon.*

Perform? I'll show you 'perform,' asshole. Nevertheless, a shiver of arousal ran through Will, the words sending a thrill down his spine. Hannibal's eloquence always had that effect on him, the way each text seemed to carry the weight of Hannibal's voice, rich and smooth like velvet. He glanced around the room, ensuring that everyone was still absorbed in their work. Pretending to look through case files, he positioned the phone just out of view, his thumb moving quickly across the screen.

[3:59pm] Perform under pressure?

[4:00pm] Is that what you think this is?

[4:00pm] Me performing for you?

As he hit the send button for the third time, Zeller sneezed, causing Will to flinch–he had been so absorbed in the texts with Hannibal that reality had slipped away a little. He shot Zeller a quick, annoyed glance, but Zeller was already back to his own work, oblivious to Will's momentary lapse.

Will resolved to refocus on the case files, not wanting to draw attention. He flipped through the pages, trying to make sense of the details in front of him, but his mind was elsewhere. His phone buzzed quietly, indicating a response from Hannibal, but Will forced himself to page through the rest of the file before picking up his phone and reading the text.

[4:02pm] *Merely an observation. You do excel in challenging situations.*

Will's fingers hovered over the keys. He wanted to remind Hannibal just how well he could excel in challenging situations, to put him through trials that would test his control, his composure. Will's thoughts darkened, his pulse quickening at the idea of pushing Hannibal to the edge, of watching him struggle to maintain that veneer of calm perfection he so carefully cultivated.

A slow, wicked smile curled at the corners of Will's mouth as he imagined the scenarios he could devise. Situations where Hannibal's carefully constructed world would tremble, where his impeccable control would falter under Will's command. The thought of bending Hannibal to his will, of making him submit in the most primal, intimate way, filled Will with a heady sense of power.

As he considered the possibilities, a vivid image flashed through his mind–Hannibal on his knees, tears streaming down his face as he choked on Will's cock. The sight of Hannibal's usually composed features twisted in desperate, raw need, his eyes wide and glassy, made Will's breath hitch. The thought of holding Hannibal's head in place, forcing him to take every inch, was intoxicating. He could almost feel the tight, wet heat of Hannibal's mouth, the way his throat would constrict around him, the vibrations of his muffled gasps sending jolts of pleasure straight to Will's core.

Will's arousal spiked, a dark, possessive hunger surging within him. This was payback, a way to remind Hannibal of who truly held the power between them. Will wanted to see him break, to reduce him to a trembling, tear-streaked mess, and then pull him back together, just to tear him apart again. The thought of Hannibal's surrender, of the raw vulnerability he would expose in those moments, only fueled Will's desire further.

His fingers tightened around the phone, the anticipation building within him like a coiled spring ready to snap. He would show Hannibal his place, make him understand that while he might be a master of manipulation, Will was the one who could bring him to his knees–literally and figuratively. But he needed to rein in his thoughts, to not let Hannibal catch wind of what Will was planning.

[4:11pm] Maybe I do

[4:11pm] But that doesn't mean you get a free pass

Setting his phone down, a wicked smile curled at the edges of Will's lips, the satisfaction of his thoughts lingering in the air around him. He cast a glance at the case files spread haphazardly across the desk, but the words and images meant nothing to him now. His mind was already far from the sterile confines of the office, lost in the anticipation of what was to come. The clock on the wall ticked quietly, and Will knew there was no point in pretending to focus any longer.

He would be able to slip away soon; it was near enough to the end of the workday. As a plan crystallized in his thoughts, he considered the necessary preparations. He'd stop at home first, make sure the dogs were fed and settled for the night, and pack a bag. Then, with everything in place, he would head up to Baltimore, where the real work would begin. Hannibal's response brought him out of his excited reverie.

[4:14pm] *I would never assume as much.*

Holding in a chuckle, Will knew that Hannibal was probably hoping he wouldn't get a free pass. The man thrived on challenges, and Will was more than ready to provide one.

[4:16pm] I think you need a refresher on the consequences of meddling behind my back.

[4:17pm] Something to make sure it really sinks in this time

By now, Will was risking a fully-fledged erection in the lab, something he would very much like to avoid. The thrill of asserting control over Hannibal, of reminding him who held the reins, was intoxicating. He needed to get out of there. Now. Will began packing up his things, shoving case files into his bag with barely contained urgency.

He glanced around, noting that his colleagues were still engrossed in their work. Taking a deep breath, he approached Jack, who was immersed in his own case file. "Hey, Jack," Will started, his voice steady despite the adrenaline coursing through him. "One of my dogs has an injured paw. Needs a bit of extra attention. Do you mind if I head out a bit early?"

Jack looked up, eyebrows raised in mild surprise. "An injured paw, huh?"

Will nodded, trying to look as earnest as possible. "Yeah, poor thing's been limping around. Figured I'd take him to the vet."

Jack studied him for a moment, then nodded. "Alright, Graham. Take care of it. We can pick this up tomorrow."

"Thanks, Jack," Will replied, relief washing over him. As he walked away, he could feel Alana's suspicious gaze burning into his back, her eyes tracking his every movement. Ignoring the prickling sensation at the nape of his neck, Will kept his pace steady, steadfastly ignoring her. As he closed the door to the lab behind him, his phone buzzed again.

[4:21pm] *I find myself eagerly anticipating your lesson. This evening?*

Will bit back a snort as he walked out of the lab, navigating the halls of the FBI on autopilot. Even as he tried to maintain his composure, the words from Hannibal's text fanned the flames

of his simmering arousal, sending a shiver down his spine. The anticipation of what was to come thrummed through his veins, heightening his senses.

[4:28pm] You read my mind

[4:28pm] I'll be at your office in a couple hours

[4:29pm] Need to swing by home first

[4:29pm] *See you soon, darling.*

Chest warming at the endearment, Will slipped his phone back into his pocket, the device feeling almost hot against his skin. The idea of seeing Hannibal soon, of having him at his mercy, sent another wave of heat through him. They would have to discuss the more serious complications the photo had the potential to cause later–they couldn't fool Jack or Alana forever–but Will was confident they would manage them as they came. For now, the anticipation of the evening's plans was enough to eclipse any lingering doubts or concerns.

The drive home felt like a blur, his thoughts consumed with the coming encounter. He knew Hannibal thrived on these power plays, but tonight, Will intended to ensure the balance of power was unmistakably clear. The anticipation thrummed through him, each mile bringing him closer to the inevitable confrontation.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
"À c't'heure, on attend pendant qu'le gumbo mijote," = Now, we gotta let the gumbo simmer.
"Ça va prendre une heure, quoi qu'on devrait faire?" = It'll take about an hour, what should we do?
"Vilain garçon, Will," = Naughty boy, Will
"Que faut-il faire à ce sujet?" = "What's to be done about that?"

as always, i hope y'all enjoyed!! it was really fun getting to write them all soft and fluffy, they deserve it! let me know in the comments what you thought, and come yell about this fic with me on tumblr, @graciereadshannigram!

Lesson, Part 1

Chapter Notes

hey y'all, we've officially crossed the 150k word mark!!! when this started, i thought i'd be LUCKY if this made it to 75k, and now we're double that??? nuts.

as you can probably guess, this chapter ended up getting WAY long, so i've split it at the spot it makes the most sense. deadlines need to be right in front of my face or else i will completely ignore them, so i decided to split the chapter up rather than wait another week for the entire thing to be completed.

i figured y'all would appreciate the more frequent posting schedule too, even if it means shorter chapters!

enjoy babes <3

beta'd by the very lovely EnmitiesSaddestGlare who kept me from getting too in my head over this, love u bb!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The crisp evening air greeted Will as he parked and stepped out of his car, his hands instinctively rubbing together to ward off the chill that had crept in with the darkness of evening. He had rushed through settling his dogs, a sense of urgency driving him as he moved through their familiar routine. Every second felt like an eternity, his mind already half-occupied with what lay ahead, and the drive up to Baltimore had stretched out, each mile passing like the slow ticking of a clock.

As Will approached Hannibal's building, the distant sounds of the city—cars passing, murmured voices—began to fade, replaced by the quiet anticipation thrumming through his veins. He pushed open the door and stepped inside, the cold replaced by the muted warmth of the building's interior. The door clicked shut behind him with a soft snick, cutting off the hum of the world outside. The air inside felt different, heavier, with the silence within the building amplifying the sound of his footsteps against the polished floor. The world outside had ceased to exist, leaving only the hollow echo of his own thoughts, which quickly returned to Hannibal's motivations.

Hannibal had always taken a certain flippant pleasure in flaunting his superiority before the FBI. Watching them chase their own tails, utterly oblivious to just how close he really was to them, gave him a sense of satisfaction, the truth forever slipping just out of their reach. It wasn't a stretch for Will to imagine Hannibal wanting to tease at Will's true loyalty, to sow chaos and confusion among Jack and the rest of the team.

With his mind always running on multiple tracks, one devoted solely to his own amusement, Hannibal relished the absurdity of it all. He knew that the real victory for Hannibal wasn't just in the taunting gestures or clever wordplay—it was in the fact that Will, who could see through every manipulation and deceit, had willingly chosen him. Being behind the veil with Hannibal, fully aware of his games yet still choosing to engage, added a layer of satisfaction that Will knew Hannibal delighted in.

As Will considered the situation from Hannibal's perspective, he couldn't shake the feeling that the explanation didn't fully capture the depth of Hannibal's motivations; it felt like a surface-level diversion, masking something deeper. Will hadn't believed Hannibal for a second when he offered the taunting excuse of simply catering to Will's desires—the false innocence was transparent, almost laughable, a convenient lie wrapped in a veneer of sincerity that Will easily saw through.

His mind circled back to the question, his thoughts narrowing in focus. It wasn't just about the games or the manipulation—there was something more primal at play, something that Hannibal was deliberately pushing Will toward. *God, you're insufferable sometimes* , Will thought, a twitch of fond exasperation tugging at the corner of his mouth. Hannibal could be infuriatingly obtuse in his roundabout way of asking for what he truly wanted, relying on layers of manipulation instead of directness. *Why do you always have to make everything so damn complicated?*

As he reached the waiting room, each step brought a new wave of eagerness that thrummed through him, the tension coiling in his chest like a tightly wound spring. Will could tell himself otherwise, but the truth was undeniable—he enjoyed these games Hannibal played. The thrill was incomparable, and the thought of stepping into this latest game sent a pulse of heat through him that he couldn't quite suppress.

Will paused for a brief moment, his hand hovering over the doorknob as the echoes of his thoughts faded, leaving only the reality of what awaited him on the other side. With a steadying breath, he placed his hand on the cool metal of the knob, basking in the electric charge that surged through him at the thought of what was to come.

Turning the knob and pushing the door open, Will's gaze immediately found Hannibal seated at his desk, seemingly absorbed in the act of sketching. The soft scratch of pencil on paper was the only sound in the room, the familiar rhythm triggering a memory of the morning before when Hannibal had sketched him with the same quiet focus. That memory brought with it the warmth of Hannibal's eyes on him, the intimate exchange of glances that had preceded the morning tangled in each other, the sheets twisted around their limbs. Arousal flared in Will's chest, a heat that threatened to distract him before they even began. *Focus* , Will silently reprimanded himself, forcing his thoughts back to the present moment, but the echo of that intimacy lingered.

As Will watched, Hannibal paused in his sketching, the pencil hovering just above the paper. He inhaled deeply, his chest rising with the breath, his nostrils flaring slightly as he took in the scent of the room. Will's eyes narrowed, catching the subtle shift in Hannibal's expression —the way his lips parted just a fraction, the faintest hint of a smile tugging at the corners. It

was as though Hannibal was savoring something, his eyes still cast downward, his body perfectly still except for the slight flare of his nostrils.

Pulse quickening, he realized what Hannibal had caught—his arousal, the undeniable scent of it hanging in the air between them. Hannibal's eyes flicked up, meeting Will's with a knowing look, the satisfaction in his gaze unmistakable. The corners of his mouth curved into a small, almost smug smile, the expression of a man who had anticipated exactly this, and who was nourished by the effect he had on Will.

There was an eagerness there, barely restrained, for what Will might do next. But deeper still, beneath the carefully constructed facade of Hannibal's person-suit, was a hunger—a raw need that Hannibal usually kept hidden, even from Will. The intensity of that hunger sent a bolt of desire through Will, igniting a fire low in his belly. It was a look he had seen before, but rarely, and it never failed to stir something deep within him.

Allowing his own desire to surface, Will let the corner of his mouth curve into a faint, almost predatory smile. The heat between them was palpable, simmering just below the surface, ready to explode at the slightest provocation. The tension hung in the air like a living thing, each heartbeat and breath amplifying the electric connection that bound them together. Will could feel the anticipation thrumming between them, a promise of what was to come, the energy between them so thick it was almost suffocating.

Hannibal stood, his movements fluid and graceful, and crossed the room to meet Will. Without a word, he reached out, his fingers brushing over Will's shoulders as he helped him out of his coat. The contact, though light, sent a spark through Will's skin, the heat of Hannibal's touch igniting every nerve it passed over, even through the layers of fabric.

The fingers lingered just a moment longer than necessary, sliding down Will's arms as Hannibal removed the coat, his touch a whisper of promise. Will suppressed a shiver, the slow burn of desire flaring in response to the intimate attention. As Hannibal turned to hang the coat neatly on the rack, Will's gaze tracked the movement, the elegance of Hannibal's form moving like liquid silk, the way his fingers caressed the fabric as though it were a living thing.

"You arrived more quickly than I anticipated," Hannibal remarked, his tone casual, despite the tension that simmered just below the surface.

Will remained silent for a beat, his eyes locked on Hannibal's, letting the pause stretch just long enough to be felt. "Traffic was easy," Will finally replied, his voice measured, the calm surface barely masking the undercurrent of something darker. "And I was… motivated." The steadiness of his tone carried an edge, a quiet authority that hinted at the tension coiling between them.

With a soft hum, Hannibal moved further into the room, his steps measured and purposeful, before leaning casually against his desk. Will couldn't help but admire how effortlessly Hannibal carried himself, even in moments like these. There was an undeniable magnetism to the man, a blend of elegance and danger that always had Will's attention. It wasn't just Hannibal's appearance—the sharp lines of his tailored suit, the way his hair framed his face, the blatant strength in his posture—but the way he seemed to be offering himself up while

simultaneously challenging Will to take what he wanted. It was a tantalizing combination, one that stirred something deep and primal within Will, his thoughts darkening as he began to stalk after Hannibal.

With every step, Will allowed himself to settle into his role for the evening. He had promised a lesson, and he intended to deliver it in a way that would ensure it stuck. His mind conjured up images of how Hannibal would look after he was through: disheveled, marked by Will's hands and mouth, a man reduced from the polished exterior he so carefully maintained to something raw and vulnerable, yet more powerful in his submission. Tonight wasn't just about control; it was about imprinting something indelible on Hannibal, a memory that would linger, a constant reminder of exactly who held the reins.

"Tell me, Hannibal," Will began, his voice steady but laced with a quiet intensity as he reached into his jacket. The words were a prelude, a signal that he was ready to engage fully in whatever game Hannibal had set up. He pulled out the newspaper with a purposeful motion, his gaze never leaving Hannibal's as he tossed it onto the desk. The pages fanned out, the photograph of them at the opera staring up at them both, a stark reminder of the intimacy that had been publicly captured. "What exactly were you hoping to get out of this?"

Hannibal's gaze darted to the image and then back to Will, his expression remaining composed, but Will didn't miss the minute curve at the corner of Hannibal's mouth, a brief twitch that spoke of triumph and satisfaction. The way Hannibal's eyes lingered on the photo, with that flicker of smugness, made it clear that he was quietly reveling in the disruption he had caused, relishing the results of his carefully laid plans.

But as Will watched him, he caught something else in Hannibal's gaze—an undercurrent of something deeper, more intense. The satisfaction Hannibal took from the photograph was evident, but there was a hint of something more animalistic lurking beneath the surface. This went beyond toying with the FBI; it was about pushing Will, testing the boundaries between them. The photograph was merely a move in a game that transcended simple disruption.

Hannibal's reaction was fleeting, a brief ripple of something almost imperceptible, before his composure returned. "I believe you are giving me too much credit, Will," he spoke, a hint of a dangerous smile crossing his lips. The words were delivered with that familiar touch of wryness, a calculated attempt to deflect and diminish the gravity of the moment.

As the words hung in the air, Will moved forward, each step slow and calculated, his presence expanding until it seemed to fill the entire room. He stopped just shy of Hannibal, their bodies close enough that the heat radiating from Hannibal's skin mingled with his own. The intimacy of the moment forced Hannibal to tilt his head slightly, a faint gesture that didn't escape Will's notice.

"I somehow doubt I've ever given you too much credit, Hannibal," Will murmured, his voice pitched into a velvet whisper. The words carried a begrudging respect, a recognition of the formidable man before him.

A mischievous light sparkled in Hannibal's eyes as he arched a brow. "If you're going to attribute such grand designs to me, Will, I suppose it would be rude of me to disabuse you of them." His voice flowed like warm honey, deep and rich, the words carrying that familiar

blend of irony and understated provocation, a gentle tug on the invisible thread that bound them together, pulling Will ever closer.

Though his lips twitched, Will didn't take the bait. As he spoke, he began to pace slowly across the room, his movements measured, as if considering every inch of the space. "You've never been one to shy away from playing the omnipotent puppeteer, Hannibal," he replied, his voice cool, controlled. "But you really expect me to believe this is simply a little game solely for your own amusement?"

"Solely for my own amusement?" Hannibal echoed, his tone dripping with feigned curiosity, yet there was a razor-sharp edge beneath the surface, a challenge in the way his words curled around Will's senses, tightening the grip on that unseen thread. "Surely you don't think I could have predicted the photograph would find its way into the public eye." Hannibal's hand moved in a languid, almost dismissive gesture, fingers brushing against the edge of the desk as if to underscore his supposed lack of influence. "Some things are simply beyond even my control."

A trace of skepticism crossed Will's features as his brow furrowed. "Don't insult my intelligence, Hannibal. You knew exactly what you were doing—right down to how it would play out."

A faint, enigmatic smile tugged at the corners of Hannibal's lips, his gaze unwavering. "And if I did?"

Will stopped his pacing, coming to a halt at the windows across from Hannibal. He turned, his eyes locked onto Hannibal's, the intensity of his gaze narrowing the space between them in an instant. "Then you're lucky," he began, his voice low, laced with an underlying warning, "that I was able to convince Jack I'm still on the FBI's side. That I haven't completely lost myself in whatever twisted game you're playing."

"Lucky?" Hannibal mused, his tone contemplative. "I don't believe in luck, Will. Only in the inevitability of those who are destined to rise above the fray." His voice dipped lower, more intimate. "Consider the myth of Theseus—how he ventured into the labyrinth, guided by Ariadne's thread. It was not luck that saved him from the Minotaur's jaws, but his intellect, his unyielding resolve. He navigated the labyrinth, not as a victim of circumstance, but as a master of his own fate."

As he spoke, Will could detect something else in Hannibal's tone—an almost reverent quality that hadn't been there before. It likely would have gone unnoticed by anyone else, but Will was attuned to the nuances of Hannibal's speech, the layers of meaning that often lay just beneath the surface. The way Hannibal's gaze roved over Will was almost devotional, as if he were beholding something divine. The shift was subtle, a barely-there change in posture, the slightest tilt of his head as if to offer himself up to Will's power, to the force of Will's will.

Hannibal's gaze held Will's, the metaphor hanging in the charged air between them. "I knew you would navigate the maze I placed before you, that you would find your way through the corridors of Jack's suspicions with threads of your own making—that same sharpness of mind that has always set you apart."

Will felt the weight of Hannibal's words settle between them, each one crafted to acknowledge the power Will had shown, while also reminding him of the control Hannibal still believed he held. But there was something more in Hannibal's tone, something softer yet no less intense. "The labyrinth is yours to command, and the Minotaur—well, that was merely a test to see how you would wield your power." Hannibal's hand lifted slowly, deliberately, as he reached out to adjust the cuff of his sleeve, a seemingly innocuous gesture. "And you wield it beautifully."

The admiration—bordering on devotion—in Hannibal's tone as he finished speaking sent a surge of unexpected emotion through Will. He felt a sense of honor at the depth of Hannibal's feelings—feelings that were laid bare in this brief, intense moment. The weight of it all pressed down on Will's chest, making it difficult to take in a full breath. Hannibal had always been the one to pull the strings, to orchestrate their interactions with a calculated precision. But now, here he was, standing before Will with something close to awe in his gaze, and that was a power Will hadn't fully grasped until now.

At the same time, Will felt a surge of exasperation rise within him. Hannibal's relentless need to poke and prod, to set up these elaborate tests, was exhausting, and yet, Will knew that this was simply Hannibal's nature. It was as inevitable as the changing of the tides, as unchangeable as the pull of the moon. Will could no more ask Hannibal to stop being what he was than he could ask a predator to cease its hunt. And he would never ask Hannibal to stop hunting. The very essence of who Hannibal was—the predator lurking beneath the refined exterior—was part of what drew Will to him in the first place. The hunt, the chase, the game they played—these were the things that fueled their connection, igniting a fire between them that was as dangerous as it was alluring.

But if Hannibal thought he held the upper hand, Will was more than ready to show him otherwise. A slow, calculated smile curled at the corners of his lips as he considered his next move. "If that's the case," Will began, his tone deceptively casual, "then it must be eating at you that you couldn't be there to witness my conversations with Jack and Alana."

Will tilted his head slightly, his expression one of feigned sympathy, the mockery in his gaze never wavering. The words were a subtle jab, a reminder that, despite Hannibal's careful planning, there were still things beyond his reach—moments he couldn't control or influence, no matter how meticulously he tried to orchestrate events.

The slight narrowing of Hannibal's eyes, the brief tightening of his jaw, the way his lips pressed together just a fraction harder than before—these were the tells, the small cracks exposing Hannibal's flash of irritation. Will caught the shift, that tiny flame of annoyance that Hannibal quickly tried to bury beneath a smooth exterior. But it was too late—the mask had slipped, however briefly, and Will had seen exactly what he needed to see.

Hannibal, for his part, remained outwardly calm and dismissive, though Will could sense the tension simmering just beneath the surface. "I don't care for their predictable reactions. It's yours that intrigues me," he said, his gaze steady, unwavering.

A faint, almost predatory smile curved Will's lips as he let Hannibal's words hang in the air, the tension between them thickening with every passing second. The room seemed to hum with an invisible current, the electricity of their unspoken understanding sparking in the

charged silence. “A test of how I wield my power?” Will echoed, his voice dropping to a low, dangerous murmur that sent a thrill through the space between them, reverberating in the air like a promise of things to come. He took several measured paces closer, his gaze never wavering from Hannibal’s, each movement calculated, each word chosen with care.

“Or,” Will continued, his tone cutting through the silence like a blade, “was it a test to see how I’d deal with you afterwards for setting such a test in the first place?” The challenge in his voice was undeniable, the words a direct provocation, daring Hannibal to acknowledge that he had been probing the boundaries, perhaps even unconsciously, searching for the limits of Will’s tolerance.

Hannibal’s expression remained composed, but the slight narrowing of his eyes and the tautness of his jaw betrayed the internal struggle he was facing. For a brief moment, something dark and unsettled flickered in his gaze—a flash of realization that Will had struck too close to the truth. His voice wavered slightly as he responded, a tremor running through the controlled steadiness he was trying to maintain. “You misunderstand me, Will,” he said, his tone carrying a defensive edge, the words almost too quick, as if trying to regain control of the conversation before it slipped further from his grasp.

“It was never about how you’d deal with me. My interest was solely in how you would navigate the labyrinth. This metaphorical Minotaur was merely an obstacle I placed in your way.” His words were carefully chosen, but there was an undercurrent of forced calm, a sign that Will’s accusation had rattled him more than he wanted to admit.

Without a word, Will stepped even closer, closing the already narrow space between them until their bodies were almost touching. The proximity was purposeful, designed to force Hannibal into a position of submission without ever having to explicitly demand it. He watched with keen interest as Hannibal tilted his head back further, the slight movement necessary to maintain eye contact now that Will was standing so close.

“Wind me up and watch me go, are we back to that?” he asked, his tone carrying a hint of challenge. Will almost laughed at the irony—here he was, accusing Hannibal of winding him up, when in truth, that’s exactly what he was doing to Hannibal. He reached out, letting his fingers rest just over Hannibal’s heart, feeling the steady, controlled beat beneath his fingertips, before letting his hand fall down to settle on the desk. The sensation of that rhythmic pulse thrumming against his skin sent a shiver through Will, a reminder of the life, the vitality, that lay just beneath the surface.

Hannibal’s response was as unruffled as ever, his voice carrying that familiar edge of teasing that always made Will’s pulse quicken. “Your unpredictability is thrilling, my dear Will,” he said, his eyes steady, never leaving Will’s. “It can hardly be called my fault that you react so delightfully when… wound.”

Delightful, am I? Hannibal needed to be reminded that Will was not to be played with, not anymore. Will held the power now, not Hannibal. The thought simmered in Will’s mind, a quiet but resolute realization: The days of being manipulated, of dancing to the tune Hannibal played, were over. This time, Will was going to set the rhythm, and Hannibal would follow—or fall.

Will's voice dropped lower, a quiet intensity threading through his words as he locked eyes with Hannibal. "Let's make one thing clear, Hannibal," he began, each word deliberate, infused with a dominance that seemed to wrap around Hannibal, tightening with each syllable. "We both know I'm far more than a pawn for you to move around the board at your leisure. I'm your equal—if not better." As he spoke, he leaned in slightly, a slight curl at the edge of his lips. His hand slid from the desk to the fabric of Hannibal's jacket, his touch deceptively light, brushing over Hannibal's chest, feeling the steady rise and fall of his breath, settling on his sternum.

He paused, letting the words settle between them, his gaze never wavering. The silence stretched out, thick and charged, as he watched for Hannibal's reaction. Will could see the way Hannibal's pupils dilated, the slight flare of his nostrils as he took in a slow breath, the only indication of the effect Will's words were having on him. The room seemed to shrink around them, the air thick and heavy.

"And," Will continued, his voice dropping to a near-whisper, "you will treat me as such." The command in his tone was undeniable, an unyielding declaration that left no room for doubt. There was a moment of charged stillness, the air between them thick with tension, as Will's fingers curled slightly, his palm pressing against Hannibal's front in a subtle, possessive grip.

The pressure was light but firm, a quiet reminder of Will's dominance, of the power he now held. His hand lingered there, feeling the steady beat of Hannibal's heart beneath his palm, the warmth of his body seeping into Will's skin. The intimacy of the gesture was almost suffocating, the touch both a claim and a warning. Will's eyes never left Hannibal's, his gaze intense, commanding, as if daring him to challenge the authority that now dripped from every word, every movement.

Hannibal's lips parted slightly, his breath coming in short, shallow bursts. "Yes, Will," he murmured, his voice barely above a whisper, the words carrying a note of submission that was impossible to miss.

The expression on Hannibal's face was as if he were standing before a deity who had just descended to earth. The controlled facade that Hannibal so meticulously maintained began to fracture, revealing the raw vulnerability beneath. For a brief moment, his breath hitched, his chest rising and falling in a rhythm that hinted at the depth of his reaction. It was as if Will's words had struck at the very core of him, forcing a submissive reaction that he couldn't completely suppress.

It came to Will with startling clarity. This—this was what Hannibal wanted. Will knew that Hannibal craved the loss of control, that had always been obvious. It was woven into the fabric of their relationship, the way Hannibal would allow Will to overpower him in ways that were as much psychological as they were physical. Yet, for all his intellect and manipulative prowess, Hannibal still clung to the need to orchestrate elaborate machinations, to create scenarios that would force Will's hand. As if the mere act of asking for what he wanted would strip away some essential part of his identity, or worse, leave him vulnerable in a way he couldn't bear.

A tender ache bloomed in Will's chest at the realization. He wanted to comfort Hannibal, to reach out and reassure him that all he had to do was ask, and Will would be there to give him

exactly what he needed, no more, no less. The urge to soothe, to offer that comfort, was strong—a nearly overwhelming desire to ease the unspoken fear he could now see beneath Hannibal's calm exterior. But as quickly as the thought surfaced, Will pushed it aside. A gentle touch, a soft word—it wouldn't make the lesson stick. Hannibal needed something more.

Will's lips curled into a slow, predatory smile. "That's right, darlin'" he drawled, his tone a blend of reassurance and dominance. Will's fingers tightened against the fabric of Hannibal's shirt, pressing just enough to convey his point, to remind Hannibal that he was in control here. But rather than giving in to the impulse to push further, Will did the unexpected—he released his hold, letting his hand fall away as he took a step back.

Hannibal's eyes flashed, a shadow of something passing through them–surprise, perhaps, mingled with the faintest trace of anticipation. It was a fleeting moment, but Will caught it, recognizing the subtle shift in the air between them. Hannibal had expected something else, had anticipated a reaction, and Will's refusal to play along left him momentarily off-balance. Will remained calm, letting the silence stretch out, allowing it to settle between them like a predator circling its prey, patient and unhurried.

"But is it so wrong to savor the way your claws come out, Will?" Hannibal's voice, though measured, held a slight tremor, each word carrying a calculated weight. It was as though he was testing the waters, trying to reassert himself in a game where the stakes had subtly shifted. The edge in his tone was unmistakable—a challenge wrapped in civility, an attempt to reclaim the upper hand. "To see how tension hones your instincts, how you rise when the pressure builds?"

Will could practically feel the weight of Hannibal's need pressing against him, the hidden craving for Will to take the reins, to push him further, closer to the edge of whatever dark satisfaction he sought. But while Hannibal might be a masterful hunter, stalking his prey with lethal precision, he knew nothing about fishing, about the patience it required, about the delicate art of crafting a lure so enticing that it convinced the prey to bite, even when they weren't hungry. That was Will's domain.

The idea of forcing Hannibal to ask, to admit his need out loud—the notion was electrifying. Will luxuriated in the idea of stripping away Hannibal's control, piece by piece, unraveling the composure that Hannibal held so tightly to his chest. He resolved, then and there, to see just how far he could push Hannibal before he broke—before he had no choice but to use his words, to vocalize the craving that had driven him to orchestrate this latest ploy. And when that moment came, when Hannibal was finally forced to ask, Will would be right there, ready to take him apart and put him back together again, piece by trembling piece.

Will knew that if he wanted to pry the truth out of Hannibal, he couldn't do it by force alone. No, he needed to prod at Hannibal's pride, his ego, just enough to crack that carefully constructed facade and coax out the admission he sought. Will wanted to hear Hannibal say it, to confess what he truly wanted, to expose the vulnerability he so desperately tried to mask. The thought of coaxing those hidden desires to the surface, of watching Hannibal squirm under the weight of his own suppressed needs, sent a thrill through Will—a dark satisfaction that he couldn't quite contain.

Will crossed his arms over his chest, his tone sharp yet tinged with amusement as he regarded Hannibal. “Is that it, Hannibal? Pushing the limits, testing my patience—hoping I’ll bite down on the bait you’ve left dangling so artfully?”

Taking a slow, measured step forward, Will watched for a reaction to his question. Hannibal’s shoulders tensed subtly, his spine straightening ever so slightly, a small but telling change in posture that served as a nonverbal affirmation. The faintest catch in Hannibal’s breath didn’t escape Will’s notice—the whispered intake of air that signaled Hannibal’s awareness of the narrowing space between them. Will’s fingers twitched at his side, resisting the urge to reach out and touch, knowing he didn’t need to; the tension in the air between them was thick enough.

Will allowed a slow, sharp smile to curl at the corners of his lips, the kind that promised both danger and desire. His eyes flickered with a predatory gleam as he leaned in closer, just enough to let his breath brush against Hannibal’s ear, a whisper of heat that sent a shiver down the other man’s spine. “So you *do* want me to take the bait, Hannibal,” Will murmured, his voice a low, velvety purr that thrummed with dark intent. He let his lips hover close to Hannibal’s ear, delighting in the way Hannibal’s pulse quickened beneath his skin. “Why is that, hmm?”

The question hung in the air, heavy with implication. Will knew it wasn’t really a question at all—it was a provocation, a dare wrapped in seductive inquiry. Hannibal’s pupils dilated, the inky black swallowing the color of his irises, his lips parting just slightly as if to speak, but no words came. The silence that followed was thick, and Will could feel the weight of it pressing against his skin, a tangible force pulling at the edges of his control.

Hannibal’s body gave him away, the near imperceptible lean forward, his chest brushing against Will, the way his breath quickened, as if his entire being was drawn irresistibly toward Will. But just as quickly, Hannibal jerked back, his movement sharp—there was a brief flare of something unsteady in his eyes. Will’s gaze narrowed, catching the faint waver in Hannibal’s lower lip, the barely perceptible twitch in his brow before Hannibal could mask it with calculated, almost forced elegance.

Hannibal’s lips quirked up in a tight, controlled smile, but Will could see the tension in the corners of his mouth, the way it didn’t quite reach his eyes. “Why would I need to take the bait when I’ve already reeled you in?” His voice flowed easily, yet Will detected the subtle tremor beneath the surface, like a tightrope walker just beginning to sway, struggling to maintain a flawless composure. Hannibal tilted his head, the muscles in his jaw flexing as he tried to steady his breath. But despite his efforts, a flicker of hesitation betrayed him, momentarily breaking through the mask he fought to maintain. “Perhaps it’s not the bait that interests me, Will, but the struggle that follows.”

The waver in Hannibal’s voice was a twisted pleasure, feeding the hunger in Will’s gut. He leaned in, his gaze drifting over the tense line of Hannibal’s throat. “I doubt that’s really what you’re interested in, Hannibal,” Will murmured, his voice a low, intimate rasp that sent a shiver down Hannibal’s spine. He let his breath fan across Hannibal’s lips, which parted slightly, as if drawn by the silent promise hovering between them, the moment winding tighter, poised on the edge. The words hung in the charged air, the tension between them

intensifying with each passing second. “Would you like to hear what I think you’re really after?”

The question was a challenge, a dare wrapped in seduction, and Will watched with keen interest as the cracks in Hannibal’s carefully constructed mask deepened. Hannibal’s throat bobbed with a hard swallow, a faint, involuntary moan escaping on the exhale—soft, but unmistakably charged with arousal. His eyes fluttered shut for the briefest moment, as if he needed that second to gather himself, to scrape together what was left of his composure, but the intensity of Will’s gaze made it almost impossible.

When Hannibal’s eyes opened again, they were darker, glazed with need, but there was still a glimmer of defiance in them, a desperate attempt to regain control. “And what do you think that is, Will?” he managed to bite out, his voice unsteady, revealing the turmoil roiling beneath his outward calm.

Will’s lips curled into a knowing smirk, his voice dropping to a low, sultry murmur as he leaned in closer, his breath whispering across Hannibal’s lips. “You’re begging for it, Hannibal,” Will said, each word a sensuous taunt. His hand lifted, fingers brushing lightly over Hannibal’s cheek, tracing the line of his jaw with a touch that was both tender and possessive. “You want me to strip away that control you cling to so desperately. You want me to take it from you, to force your submission until there’s nothing left but the raw, unfiltered need you try so hard to hide.”

Hannibal’s reaction was immediate—his breath hitched, his pupils blown wide with arousal, darkening his gaze to something almost feral. His lips parted, trembling as he tried to pull in air, the muscles in his neck tightening as if the act of breathing had suddenly become a monumental task. His jaw quivered, the subtle tremor a telltale sign of the struggle within, the way his lips parted like he needed to gulp down the charged air between them.

Hannibal’s eyes fluttered closed for a brief moment, as if trying to regain his composure, but when they opened again, they were glazed with a potent mix of desire and a glint of vulnerability that he couldn’t quite mask. The battle raging within him was tangible–Will could feel it radiating off him, the fierce struggle to hold on to that last shred of control even as it slipped further from his grasp.

Will let his words linger, their weight pressing down on Hannibal, denying him the space to retreat. The faint twitch in Hannibal’s cheek, the subtle quiver in his lower lip—these small betrayals were evidence of his fracturing composure, the cracks in his mask widening with each passing moment. Will knew Hannibal wanted this, craved the submission he was being pushed toward, but Will wasn’t ready to give it to him. Not yet.

Will leaned in closer, the distance between them evaporating as their lips hovered on the brink of a kiss. His voice, a low, seductive whisper, spilled into the charged space between them. “Why should I give you what you want?” The question was a taunt, a velvet-edged blade that cut deep, and Will savored the way Hannibal’s breath hitched in response, the tremor running through his body. Will’s fingers ghosted over Hannibal’s collar, brushing against the skin just lightly enough to make the tension coil even tighter. “Why should I reward your manipulations?”

Without warning, Will pulled back, the sharp movement deliberate, designed to disrupt Hannibal's tenuous hold on the moment. Hannibal's eyes widened in the wake of Will's retreat, a flicker of something between confusion and desperation crossing his features. It was a crack, brief but unmistakable, and though Hannibal quickly tried to smooth it over, it was too late. The tension in his hands betrayed the grip he was struggling to keep on the situation.

The desperation in Hannibal's eyes turned to frustration, a controlled yet simmering anger just beneath the surface as he realized Will was pulling the strings now, dictating the pace of their game. Hannibal's jaw tightened, a muscle ticking just beneath his skin, his hands curling into fists as he fought to regain his footing. But the deepening crack in his composure, the minute falter in his otherwise impenetrable facade, was undeniable.

Will felt a rush of power, a surge of adrenaline that threatened to make his victory too evident, but he kept his expression carefully neutral, masking any sign of smugness. He began to pace, his movements slow and purposeful, savoring the way Hannibal's eyes tracked his every step. The room seemed to vibrate with the tension between them, the atmosphere thickening with each measured step, each heartbeat. Will's mind raced, piecing together the intricacies of their dance, knowing full well that Hannibal was struggling to regain the control he'd lost.

But Hannibal was not one to be easily outmaneuvered. He straightened, the practiced elegance of his posture returning as he attempted to reclaim his composure, though Will could see the effort it cost him. "Perhaps," Hannibal began, his voice edged with a calculated sharpness, his hands unfurling from their tight fists as he tried to steady himself, "you're projecting, Will. This hesitation, this dance we're doing—could it be that it's all about what you want? About your own desires?"

Hannibal's gaze intensified, his eyes boring into Will's as if he could will his words into reality. But Will wasn't swayed. The desperation that had flared in Hannibal's eyes moments ago hadn't vanished completely; it lingered, a faint but persistent undercurrent beneath his carefully constructed facade. Will could feel it—the way the power shifted and trembled between them, like a taut wire pulled too tight. He knew Hannibal was reaching, grasping for anything that might tilt the balance back in his favor.

"Oh, I'm well aware of my *desires* ," Will responded, his voice low and darkly seductive, the word 'desires' drawn out like a hiss, curling in the space between them. His eyes bore into Hannibal's, a challenge, a dare wrapped in velvety menace. "But the real question, Hannibal, is whether you're aware of yours." A slow, predatory smile curved Will's lips as he tilted his head slightly, watching the ripple of emotion that flitted across Hannibal's face—the faint clench of his jaw, the tightening of his eyes, the brief flash of something almost like uncertainty.

Hannibal's composure faltered for the briefest moment, his jaw tightening as if he were considering his next move carefully. "You're assuming I'm not," Hannibal replied, his voice smooth but lacking the usual confidence. The words were precise, calculated, but there was a delicate strain in his posture—the slight clench of his fingers at his sides betraying the uncertainty gnawing at him beneath the surface.

Will could almost see the storm raging behind Hannibal's eyes—the turmoil of a man unaccustomed to relinquishing control. He could see the faint twitch in Hannibal's brow, the way his chest rose and fell with shallow breaths, as if he were bracing himself for the inevitable. It wasn't dominance Hannibal sought in this moment, but the courage to surrender, to peel back the layers of himself and expose the raw, vulnerable core that he kept so carefully hidden.

A pang shot through Will's chest, his heart clenching slightly at the realization of just how difficult this was for Hannibal. The thought of Hannibal, who was always so composed, struggling to voice his needs openly stirred something deep within Will, something unnameable and intense. He knew that this—this moment of vulnerability—was a rare gift, a sign of the immense trust Hannibal was placing in him. The weight of that trust settled heavily on Will, a mix of responsibility and desire swirling within him. And despite the games they played, the back-and-forth of power and control, Will couldn't help but feel a swell of something profound in response.

There was a fire in his stare, a slow burn that promised to sear through the facade Hannibal clung to. "Alright," Will murmured, his tone mellowing to something more contemplative, more intimate. He took a step closer, his presence a tangible force that seemed to pull Hannibal toward him. Will's hand brushed ever so lightly against Hannibal's, the heat between them sending shivers across his skin. "Maybe you are aware of what you want."

Will's voice dropped to a low, dangerous growl, the sound vibrating through the charged air. "So why won't you just ask for it?" The words came out harsher than he intended, an unfiltered demand laced with the raw edge of his own need, the desire to push through Hannibal's walls. His breath mingled with Hannibal's, hot and heavy, their proximity almost unbearable, like two magnets on the verge of collision. The space between them seemed to hum with anticipation, the very air around them thickening with the weight of unspoken desire. He could feel Hannibal's pulse quicken, his heartbeat echoing the electric charge between them, as if the world itself was holding its breath, waiting for what would come next.

Hannibal's eyes slid closed, as if trying to shield himself from the raw intensity of Will's gaze, seeking refuge in the darkness behind his eyelids. But not before Will caught sight of a light sheen in his eyes, not just a glimmer of vulnerability, but a spark of arousal that Hannibal was struggling to suppress. Without hesitation, Will's hand moved as if drawn by gravity, his fingers ghosting along Hannibal's cheek. The contact was gentle, almost reverent, a soft contradiction to the tension that coiled like a snake between them.

The moment Will's fingers brushed against his skin, Hannibal's eyes snapped open, wide and searching, as if trying to find something in Will's expression that he could cling to. For a heartbeat, the air between them seemed to still, charged with the weight of unspoken understanding. But as Will's touch remained steady, unyielding in its tenderness, Hannibal's resolve wavered. His eyes fluttered shut again, this time in what seemed like surrender, a passive acceptance of the touch. A soft exhale escaped Hannibal's lips, more a sigh of pleasure than relief, the tension in his body shifting, melting into something more yielding, more eager. The slight tilt of Hannibal's head toward Will's hand was an invitation for more, a surrender to the connection he could no longer deny himself.

His thumb brushed across Hannibal's jawline, the touch tender yet possessive, sending a visible shiver down Hannibal's spine. Will felt the tremor beneath his hand, the way Hannibal's breath stuttered at the contact, his chest rising and falling with rapid, shallow breaths. Will's eyes flicked downward, catching sight of the unmistakable evidence of Hannibal's arousal pressing against the fabric of his trousers. The sight sparked a surge of heat through Will, his own need intensifying, throbbing with the realization of the power he held.

For a brief moment, the world seemed to narrow down to just this—just them—Hannibal, unguarded, allowing himself to feel the full impact of Will's presence, and Will, holding the reins of control with a firm, unrelenting grip. But it was more than trust—Hannibal was on the edge, teetering between surrender and desire, the need to be claimed radiating off him in waves.

Will's fingers trailed down Hannibal's throat, a movement that ended with his hand resting just over the rapid pulse beneath Hannibal's skin. The rhythm was fast, betraying the composure that Hannibal so carefully maintained, and Will could feel the beat against his fingertips—a tangible reminder of the man's humanity, his vulnerability.

When Hannibal finally spoke, his voice was hushed, almost reverent, as if he were addressing something sacred. His words were a confession, a quiet acknowledgment of the power Will held. "Tell me, Will… what would you have me do?"

There was a vulnerability in the way Hannibal asked the question, an edge of something almost desperate in his tone. For Hannibal, admitting need was akin to admitting weakness, a vulnerability that he guarded fiercely. But here, now, in this charged moment between them, that ironclad guard was slipping, revealing the raw need simmering beneath Hannibal's composed exterior.

Will's heart tightened at the sight, but he held firm. Hannibal's eyes were pools of dark intensity, the admission buried within them, pleading with Will to take the lead. This was about more than words; it was about leading Hannibal through the uncharted territory of trust. The tension coiled in Hannibal's posture, the subtle clench of his jaw—all of it spoke of the battle between his desire for control and the deeper, more base urge to surrender. Will knew that struggle intimately, understood how it tugged at the edges of Hannibal's carefully constructed persona. But Will also knew that to truly give Hannibal what he needed, he couldn't bend, couldn't waver.

"Trust me, Hannibal," Will murmured, letting the words hang heavy in the charged space between them. His hand drifted lower, the faintest brush of his fingers against the straining bulge in Hannibal's trousers, the touch so light it was almost cruel in its teasing. The contact was fleeting, but enough to send a shiver rippling through Hannibal's body. "Tell me what you want, and I'll give you what you need." His fingers tightened their hold, just enough to press the point home. Beneath his touch, Will felt the subtle ripple of muscle, the way Hannibal's thigh tensed—a reflection of the inner turmoil he was battling. The message was

clear: Hannibal was not in control here, not anymore. He didn't need to be in charge, didn't need to dictate the terms.

The silence between them thickened, every second stretching as if the very air was holding its breath. Will could almost hear the gears turning in Hannibal's mind, the struggle playing out behind those dark, intense eyes. Then, he saw it—the moment Hannibal broke. It was subtle, a shift in the way his gaze softened, the rigid tension in his shoulders relaxing ever so slightly, as if the burden of resistance was finally too heavy to carry. The defiance that had flared so brightly was waning, giving way to a quiet, almost resigned acceptance.

That's it, baby, Will thought, his lips curving into a slow, satisfied smile as he felt the final, inevitable surrender.

Hannibal's voice emerged, barely more than a whisper, roughened with an unmistakable mix of arousal and frustration. "Will…" The name slipped from his lips like a confession, the syllables laced with a need so raw, so pure, it sent a shiver down Will's spine. He hesitated, the words catching in his throat, as though the mere act of articulating his need was almost too much to bear. His eyes, usually so composed and calculating, were wide, pleading, the silent cry of a man on the edge, begging for release. "I need…" The sentence trailed off, unfinished, as if even now, Hannibal couldn't fully admit what he was asking for. But the look in his eyes said it all— the plea for Will to take him, to lead him to the brink, and beyond.

Will's gaze softened, just for a heartbeat, as he watched Hannibal's internal struggle unfold. In that brief moment, he felt a surge of something akin to reverence for the trust being laid bare before him. It was a rare and precious offering, this raw, unguarded need that Hannibal was revealing, and Will's pulse quickened at the enormity of it. He wasn't just holding physical power over Hannibal; he was holding the reins to something far deeper, something that Hannibal would never offer to anyone else. The gravity of that trust sent a rush of desire through Will, mingled with a fierce protectiveness that took root in his chest.

Deciding to show a sliver of mercy, Will loosened his grip, feeling the tension ease beneath his fingers as Hannibal drew in a slightly deeper breath. But even as he granted this small reprieve, his hand remained in place, a constant reminder of who was in control, of who was holding Hannibal in check.

"Hannibal," Will murmured, his voice dropping to a low, commanding whisper that seemed to vibrate in the air between them. The sound was both an invitation and a command, laced with an undeniable authority. "Show me. Show me what you need."

Will's thumb brushed over the pulse at Hannibal's throat one last time before his hand slowly released its grip, allowing a beat of silence to stretch between them as their eyes locked. In that heated gaze, everything was communicated—no further words were necessary. Will's fingers lingered at the base of Hannibal's neck before drifting away, his hand hovering in the space between them, reluctant to break the connection. Then, almost imperceptibly at first, Hannibal began to move.

His descent was slow, deliberate, each motion a declaration of his submission. Will's breath hitched as he watched, a mixture of pride and primal possessiveness swelling within him. Hannibal's hands slid down his sides, the touch light and reverent, as if he was committing every curve, every contour of Will's body to memory. Will's muscles tensed under the feather-light caress, the heat of Hannibal's hands searing through the fabric of his shirt, each touch leaving a trail of fire in its wake. Hannibal's eyes never left Will's, the intensity of that gaze sending a thrill through Will's body, a sharp jolt of desire that left him momentarily breathless.

As Hannibal's knees finally touched the floor, Will exhaled slowly, the sound almost a shudder. The room seemed to pulse with the gravity of the moment. Will's eyes flicked downward, taking in the sight of Hannibal kneeling before him, and a wave of deep satisfaction washed over him. There was something undeniably erotic in the sight—this powerful, formidable man now on his knees, offering himself up in complete and utter submission. Will's heart pounded in his chest, each rhythmic thud resonating in his ears as he absorbed the magnitude of what was happening.

It wasn't just the sight of Hannibal on his knees that stirred him; it was the knowledge that this was a choice, that Hannibal was consciously choosing to submit to Will, to trust him with his vulnerability. The weight of the gesture settled over Will like a mantle, heavy with significance, and he felt a torrent of emotions surge through him—desire mingling with something raw and animalistic, something territorial. Hannibal, who had always been so meticulous in guarding his vulnerability, was now laying it bare, but only for Will. The thought sent a surge of possessive pride through Will, knowing that this was a side of Hannibal that no one else would ever see.

Hannibal's hands found their place on Will's thighs, the touch deceptively light, a mere whisper against the fabric of Will's pants. His fingers flexed, kneading gently, almost as if testing the firmness beneath them, sending a shiver of heat spiraling up Will's spine. Will's legs instinctively tightened beneath the touch, a subtle reaction that Hannibal didn't miss. Hannibal's head tilted back slightly, just enough to meet Will's gaze with eyes that gleamed with a volatile mix of defiance and surrender—a potent combination that shot a jolt of electricity straight through Will's core. The look in Hannibal's eyes was a study in contrasts—unyielding in their intensity, yet laid bare in their submission. It was as if Hannibal was daring Will to seize control, yet at the same time, pleading silently for him to do so, his need for dominance etched into every line of his body.

Will's breath caught, his hand moving of its own accord, drawn inexorably to the dark strands of Hannibal's hair. Without conscious thought, his fingers threaded through the thick, silky locks before tightening their grip, the firmness of his hold leaving no room for misinterpretation. The sensation of Hannibal's hair against his palm, the way the strands slipped between his fingers only to be caught in his tightening grip, sent a sharp thrill down Will's spine, grounding him in the moment with visceral intensity. He felt the subtle give of Hannibal's scalp beneath the pressure, the tension in his own hand mirrored by the rigid set of Hannibal's posture, both of them teetering on the edge of something exquisitely carnal. It struck Will then just how deeply he wanted Hannibal to fully surrender, to vocalize the need that was so clearly written across his features, to admit aloud that this—this submission—was what he craved most.

“Is this what you wanted, Hannibal?” The words rolled off Will’s tongue, thick with desire, his voice ragged and rougher than he intended, yet perfectly in line with the authority that pulsed between them. He yanked on Hannibal’s hair, the movement sharp, forcing Hannibal’s head to tilt back just a bit more, exposing his throat further. “To be on your knees, waiting for me to use you?”

Hannibal’s gaze remained locked onto Will’s, the intensity only deepening, his eyes darkening to a near-black with the weight of his arousal. His pupils dilated, swallowing the color of his irises, and his breath hitched, a soft, involuntary gasp escaping his parted lips. The quickened pace of his breathing, each inhale and exhale coming faster and more shallow, betrayed the simmering heat just beneath his composed exterior. Slowly, deliberately, he nodded, the movement so slight it was almost imperceptible, but there was no mistaking the affirmation in that subtle gesture.

“Yes, Will,” Hannibal replied, his eyelids fluttering briefly before they lifted again, revealing pupils blown wide with arousal. His voice was a rough whisper, each word thick with submission and something far deeper—something primal, profound, and utterly devoted. Will’s heart swelled at the sound, a heady mix of pride and possessive satisfaction coursing through him. His grip on Hannibal’s hair tightened in response, an acknowledgment of the trust being offered, the control he now wielded. A faint tremor rippled through Hannibal’s body, his hands momentarily clenching before releasing, as if grounding himself in this act of surrender.

“I want you…” Hannibal’s voice was little more than a husky breath, his gaze locking onto Will’s with a desperate intensity. “I want you to take what’s yours.”

The words sent a jolt of arousal straight through Will, igniting every nerve in his body. The possessive urge that had been simmering within him flared to life, a deep need to claim what was being so willingly offered. His hands flexed involuntarily, as if trying to grasp onto the physical manifestation of the power that was thrumming through him. His cock twitched, straining against the fabric of his pants, throbbing with the desperate need for release that only Hannibal could provide. A muscle in his jaw tightened as he fought to maintain control, the urge to take, to dominate, to claim Hannibal as his surging through him like a tidal wave.

The sheer intensity of the moment—it was overwhelming, this rush of raw desire intertwined with something deeper, something that felt like a possessive kind of affection, fierce and almost feral. Yet, beneath that potent need, there was a protectiveness—a recognition that this wasn’t just about the physical, that Hannibal was offering up something far more precious, something that Will was determined to handle with care.

“Good boy,” Will murmured, the weight of his emotions making his voice come out hoarse, raw, dripping with approval and something that felt dangerously close to love. “You’ve done so well, baby, I’m so proud of you.” His hand, still buried in Hannibal’s hair, trembled with the effort of restraint, the desperate urge to pull him closer, to claim him right then and there, almost too much to bear. But he held back, forcing himself to savor the moment, to relish in the power and trust that was now his. “Now, open my pants,” he commanded softly, the words a breathy order that left no room for hesitation, “Take out my cock.”

Hands moving with precision, Hannibal's fingers deftly worked the button and zipper of Will's pants. His knuckles brushed against the hard length beneath the fabric with every subtle shift, sending sharp jolts of pleasure through Will's body, each touch heightening the tension coiled tightly between them. A low, involuntary exhale escaped Will's lips, his breath hitching as the cool air finally kissed his heated skin, intensifying the raw desire coursing through him.

The reverence in Hannibal's touch was unmistakable, each motion filled with a kind of worshipful intent. As though he was unwrapping something sacred, something he had longed for, yet dared not claim until now. The parting of Will's pants felt like a slow reveal, the cool air brushing against the exposed flesh of his cock, sending a shiver of anticipation up his spine, the promise of what was to come making his pulse quicken.

Will's gaze darkened, his eyes narrowing with an intensity that only deepened as he watched Hannibal. The sight of him kneeling, eyes unwavering, made Will's grip tighten briefly in Hannibal's hair—a silent command, a reminder that this was still on his terms. "This is exactly what you need, isn't it?" Will's voice was a low, dangerous purr, designed to provoke, to dominate, and to remind Hannibal of the control he had willingly surrendered. His thumb brushed across Hannibal's temple, feeling the rapid pulse that throbbed beneath the skin, a tangible sign of the arousal building within him.

Hannibal was right where he belonged—on his knees, waiting, craving the moment when Will would take full control, when he would claim him in the way they both so desperately needed. The depth of trust and desire between them stoked the flames in Will's chest, intensifying his need to dominate, to possess every part of Hannibal. "God, and knowing you trust me enough to ask…" The rawness of the admission slipped out in a low, guttural groan, heavy with both awe and a feral hunger that threatened to consume him.

Hannibal's hands trembled slightly as they rested on Will's thighs, his fingers curling into the fabric as though to anchor himself against the overwhelming tide of his own submission. His gaze never faltered, his eyes locked on Will's with a desperate intensity, begging for more. His breath caught, a soft, almost inaudible whimper escaping as he felt Will's control tighten around him, a vise-like grip that only amplified the hunger simmering just beneath his composed exterior. The hunger in Hannibal's eyes gleamed, the barely restrained desire pulsing beneath the surface, ready to spill over at any moment. The tension crackled between them, the air thick with the charged promise of what was to come.

Leaning in closer, Will let his lips graze the shell of Hannibal's ear, his hot breath ghosting over the sensitive skin, sending a visible shiver through Hannibal's body, the thrill shooting straight to his core. "I'm going to fuck your mouth, Hannibal," Will murmured, his voice a low, dangerous growl that vibrated with the force of his intent.

As the words left his lips, Will's grip on Hannibal's hair shifted, his fingers sliding deeper into the dark strands, the earlier tenderness dissolving into something much rougher, more possessive. The pads of his fingers dug into Hannibal's scalp, massaging the sensitive skin with a pressure that bordered on painful, a sharp contrast to the words he had just spoken. Hannibal's eyes fluttered shut, a soft, appreciative hum escaping him, the vibration of it

rumbling low in his throat as he leaned into the touch, every stroke of Will's fingers sending shivers down his spine.

But the tenderness was fleeting. With a sharp, deliberate intake of breath, Will's fingers tightened into an iron grip, yanking Hannibal's head back with a force that made his breath hitch, his neck exposed in a position that screamed vulnerability. The possessiveness in Will's touch was undeniable, his hand curling around the back of Hannibal's head, holding him in place with a pressure that left no room for movement, no chance for escape. It was a hold that demanded submission, that communicated in no uncertain terms who held the power in this exchange.

"I'm going to use your throat until you can't speak," Will growled, his voice dropping to a low, predatory murmur that wrapped around them both, thick with intent. He watched as Hannibal's pupils blew wide, his breath coming in short, ragged bursts, each one a testament to the arousal pulsing through him. "Until all you can think about is how good it feels to be mine," Will continued, the words a dark promise that seemed to echo in the air between them.

Hannibal visibly tensed, his breath stuttering out in a quiet, desperate whine that broke free from his throat, a sound that was raw, unfiltered—a direct reflection of the need coursing through him. It was a sound that spoke of utter submission, of a desire so all-consuming that it threatened to swallow him whole, pulling him into the depths of his own longing. The tension between them crackled with an erotic charge, each second stretching out as they both reveled in the power dynamic that had been so firmly established—Hannibal on his knees, Will towering above him, the balance of power tilted entirely in Will's favor.

The weight of Will's words washed over Hannibal like a wave, his eyelids fluttering shut as he let the promise sink in, the tremor in his brow revealing the effort it took to hold onto even the smallest shred of composure. His body reacted instinctively, his chest heaving with shallow, rapid breaths, each one trembling with the intensity of his need. It was as if the world around them had faded away, leaving only the two of them suspended in this charged moment, the tension between them so thick it was almost suffocating.

When Hannibal's eyes finally opened again, they were darkened with pure, unadulterated desire, his pupils dilated to the point of near-blackness as they locked onto Will's with a gaze that held nothing but surrender. His tongue darted out to wet his lips, the tip of it just grazing the swollen flesh before retreating, leaving them glistening in the low light. His lips parted in a silent plea, every inch of his body language a wordless offering, a submission to the power that Will held so firmly over him.

Barely above a whisper, Hannibal breathed out the one word that Will had been waiting to hear, his voice thick with arousal, the sound rough and broken, catching in his throat before it finally escaped. "Please."

Moving his hand to Hannibal's jaw, Will's grip was both firm and possessive, his fingers digging into the smooth skin as he tilted Hannibal's head back, forcing him to look up, their eyes locking with an intensity that was almost unbearable. The pressure of Will's hold was just enough to assert his dominance without causing pain, a firm reminder of who was in control. The heat in Will's gaze was palpable, a potent mix of desire and command that left no room for doubt.

Will's voice dropped to a dark, commanding growl, each word thick with authority, a promise of what was to come. "You're going to take every inch of me, Hannibal," he rumbled, the words reverberating in the pit of Hannibal's stomach, sending a sharp jolt of arousal straight to his core. "I want to feel you gag on my cock, to hear those desperate little noises you make when you're struggling to breathe. And you're going to love every fucking second of it."

Hannibal's breath hitched, a sharp intake of air catching in his throat as his hands twitched, hovering uncertainly at his sides before they found their place on Will's thighs, his fingers digging into the flesh with a force that promised to leave marks. His eyes, usually so sharp and calculating, were now clouded with need, the pupils blown wide as he absorbed Will's words. His gaze dropped from Will's eyes to his lips, as if drawn by a magnetic force, the hunger in his expression unmistakable. There was no hesitation in his submission, no moment of doubt—only the raw, unfiltered desire to give Will exactly what he wanted, to become the vessel for Will's pleasure, to feel the burn of his dominance and revel in it.

Will's thumb brushed teasingly over Hannibal's lower lip, the soft caress a stark contrast to the rough command in his voice. The touch carried the weight of what was to come, a tantalizing prelude. Hannibal's lips parted instinctively, his mouth opening to accept the intrusion, his tongue barely grazing the pad of Will's thumb in a reflexive motion.

"And when I'm done," Will continued, his voice dropping to a dangerous rumble that seemed to vibrate through the air between them, "you'll know exactly who you belong to."

Will's hand moved from Hannibal's lips to his chin, tilting his head upward with a possessive, firm grip that conveyed more than words ever could. His thumb traced a soft line along Hannibal's jaw, a small, almost tender gesture that belied the intensity of the moment, a touch that spoke of ownership, of possession.

"You'll remember exactly who gives you what you need," Will added, his tone dark and resolute, each word a command that reverberated through Hannibal's entire being. His free hand slid down to the base of Hannibal's neck, fingers curling around it with a deliberate, possessive force, holding him in place, anchoring him to the moment. The grip was strong, unyielding, a physical assertion of the dominance that Will was about to exert, a reminder that Hannibal was his to control, his to command.

Hannibal's body responded with an almost primal instinct to the pressure at his throat, his Adam's apple bobbing beneath Will's unyielding hand. The movement was subtle, but it sent a ripple through the charged air between them, the heat of Will's skin against his throat igniting a fire that burned deep within Hannibal. The firm, commanding grip sent a shudder racing down his spine, the intensity of it making his breath hitch, chest rising and falling in shallow, rapid gasps.

His eyes fluttered closed for a fleeting moment, a soft, almost inaudible whimper slipping past his parted lips— a sound that was pure, unfiltered readiness, the very essence of surrender distilled into a single, desperate note. The noise carried with it the weight of anticipation, a plea for Will to take control, to push him further into the abyss of his own desire.

When Hannibal’s eyes reopened, they were half-lidded, pupils blown wide, the darkened orbs reflecting the raw hunger that coursed through him. His lips parted slightly, tongue flicking out to wet the swollen flesh, a wordless invitation, a silent plea for Will to claim what was rightfully his. The tension between them coiled tighter, a living, breathing entity that pulsed with the heat of their shared desire, crackling in the air like a live wire, just waiting to snap.

Will’s voice dropped to a low growl, the sound vibrating in the air between them like a commandment etched in stone. “Are you ready?”

Chapter End Notes

please don't yell at me for where i cut it! (or do, go sound off in the comments if you must lolol)

and let me know what y'all think about the dialogue in this chapter, i was fighting for my LIFE and would appreciate hearing if you liked anything in particular (please?) <3

as always, you can come find me on tumblr @graciereadshannigram :)

Lesson, Part 2

Chapter Notes

buckle up y'all, and get after it!

s/o to my beta readers, EnmitiesSaddestGlare and Jay_Is_A_Rat, both of whom are absolutely wonderful and keep me from driving myself nuts <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will's voice dropped to a low growl, the sound vibrating in the air between them like a commandment etched in stone. "Are you ready?"

Hannibal's response came immediately—desperately—his head jerking in a frantic nod, the motion sharp and needy, as if he couldn't bear another second of waiting. The force of his desire radiated from him in waves that seemed to reach out and wrap around Will, pulling him in. He could practically feel the desperation clawing at Hannibal's control, tearing away the last remnants of the composure he clung to. The sheer intensity of Hannibal's craving, the way his body practically trembled with anticipation, sent a rush of arousal surging through Will, tightening his grip on the situation.

But Will wasn't about to give in to the temptation of immediate gratification. Instead, he let his cock hover just at the entrance to Hannibal's mouth, teasing him with impending pleasure. The heat radiating from Hannibal's parted lips, the way his breath trembled against Will's skin, was maddening. The struggle between his instinct to seize what he wanted and his need to submit, to be taken, was palpable, each shuddering breath a testament to the war waging inside him. Hannibal's lips quivered, caught between the urge to close around Will and the desperate, aching need to wait for permission. Will dragged the head of his cock slowly across those soft, wet lips, savoring the slick glide of Hannibal's mouth as it brushed over his sensitive flesh. Each unhurried movement was a deliberate taunt, designed to drive Hannibal wild with need, to push him to the brink without giving him what he so desperately craved.

As Hannibal's lips instinctively closed around the tip, the soft warmth of his mouth invited Will in with gentle suction, making Will's breath catch in his throat. The need to thrust forward, to bury himself in that heat, was nearly overwhelming, but Will pulled back just as quickly, denying Hannibal the satisfaction of taking him fully. A quiet, frustrated whine escaped Hannibal's throat, vibrating through the air as his body tensed, but he remained obedient, waiting—trembling on the edge of submission. This was what Will had been pushing for—Hannibal's control shattered, leaving him desperate, needy, and pliant in Will's hands.

"Not yet," Will murmured, his voice a low, teasing growl that vibrated in the charged air between them, sending a visible shiver down Hannibal's spine. He dragged his cock slowly

across Hannibal's flushed cheeks, smearing the sticky precome into his skin with deliberate intent, the glistening trail marking Hannibal as his. Hannibal's face, damp with Will's need, glowing with arousal, ignited a primal possessiveness deep within Will. The sight of Hannibal marked by his lust, his skin shining under the dim light, fanned the flames of something ferocious and all-consuming.

Will continued to tease, his cock tracing the soft curve of Hannibal's lips, pressing just enough to feel the warmth of his breath, the slight give of his flesh beneath the pressure. He could feel the tension building in Hannibal's body, the way his muscles coiled like a spring ready to snap, the way his breath stuttered in anticipation of being filled, claimed.

"I'm going to keep your mouth stuffed, Hannibal," Will whispered, his voice dripping with a dark allure, each word a velvet chain binding Hannibal's will to his own. "You won't be able to speak…" Will's thumb brushed across Hannibal's swollen lower lip, smearing the wetness further as he felt Hannibal's breath hitch at the contact, a clear indication of the deep, helpless arousal that gripped him.

"You won't be able to speak…" Will pushed forward just a fraction, the heavy weight of his cock pressing against Hannibal's lips, giving him a taste of what he craved, before pulling back slightly, keeping him on edge.

"…won't be able to do anything but feel me using you…" Tilting his head back further, Will forced Hannibal to look up at him, to see the raw hunger burning in his eyes as he toyed with him. Hannibal's body trembled, a soft, desperate moan escaping him, his need laid bare in that single, uncontrolled movement.

"Filling you up." The response was instant, the raw, visceral reaction of a body that had been pushed to its limits and was now begging for release. Hannibal's hips bucked involuntarily, as if his body was begging for the fulfillment that Will was holding just out of reach.

"That's what you want, isn't it, baby?" Will's voice dripped with darkness, a seductive, commanding tone that left no room for denial. The moan that ripped from Hannibal's throat was a raw, wordless affirmation, a guttural sound that conveyed everything—his longing, his surrender, his complete and utter need.

Will felt Hannibal push back weakly against his grip, his head moving against Will's hold, the pressure of Will's fingers a constant, firm reminder of who held the power in this moment. But even with that control, Will could sense the overwhelming desire that simmered beneath Hannibal's skin, threatening to boil over, his need too great to be contained. Hannibal's fingers trembled, inching closer to his own cock, his body clearly desperate for any kind of release from the unbearable pressure building inside him.

Will's eyes narrowed as he caught the movement, the way Hannibal's body betrayed him, yearning for relief. "Don't even think about touching yourself," Will warned, a command that left no room for negotiation. "You're mine. I'll decide when you get off. Understood?"

Hannibal's breath snagged, his body stiffening slightly, the flicker of defiance quickly drowned out by the submission that followed. The struggle was visible—Hannibal's body wanted to resist, to take control, but his mind had already surrendered, leaving him with

nothing but the need to obey. He nodded, his movements stiff with restraint, a silent acknowledgment of Will's command, a wordless agreement to surrender fully. Will could almost feel the weight of that surrender, the heavy, deliberate act of trust that Hannibal was placing in him, trusting Will to guide him through the chaos of his own need. The moment was heavy with understanding—Hannibal was placing his trust in Will, relying on him to be the anchor that would guide him through the storm of his own need.

Will leaned in, his tone taking on a darker edge, "You'll be too busy choking on my cock to say a word." His grip on Hannibal's jaw remained firm as he spoke. "So if it gets to be too much, if you need to breathe, tap my thighs twice." Will's eyes bore into Hannibal's, ensuring that the command sank in, his hand steady and unyielding as he held Hannibal in place, searching his face for any sign of hesitation or discomfort.

But there was nothing of the sort. Hannibal's eyes were filled with arousal, pupils blown wide, his gaze fixed on Will with a look of pure, unfiltered need. His lips parted, breath coming in quick, shallow gasps as the anticipation built between them. Will could feel the heat rolling off him, see the slight tremble in his body, the desperation to be used, to be taken, barely contained. A slow nod followed, a nonverbal acknowledgment of Will's words.

"I need you to use your words, darlin'," Will said, the soft Southern drawl slipping into his tone, gentling the command.

Hannibal didn't hesitate. "Yes, Will, please—" The plea spilled from his lips, rough with desperation, the need in his voice undeniable. "Please… Will… fuck my mouth. I need it—I need you." The words tumbled out quickly, almost rushed, as if he could no longer hold them back, the veneer of control he clung to slipping away entirely. There was a rawness in his voice, a crack in the word 'please' that betrayed just how deeply he craved this, how there was no more room for pride or restraint, only trust that Will would meet his needs.

Will's chest tightened with a potent mix of pride and arousal at the sound of Hannibal's words. "Good boy," he murmured, his voice thick with praise. He let his thumb slide down Hannibal's cheek, tracing the line of his jaw with tender precision, before brushing along the edge of his lip. The softness of the touch was an affirmation, a silent recognition of the courage it had taken for Hannibal to ask so openly.

"You've done so well, Hannibal," Will continued, his tone softening, his gaze locking onto Hannibal's with an intensity that conveyed both dominance and deep affection. "Asking so clearly for what you need… that's my good boy."

His thumb lingered on Hannibal's lips, feeling the warmth and slight tremor beneath the soft flesh. The warmth of Hannibal's skin beneath his fingers sent a pulse of satisfaction through Will, knowing that this was a connection that went far beyond the physical. "You've earned it," he murmured. "I'm going to give you exactly what you need."

With deliberate care, Will shifted his stance slightly, his other hand moving to rest on the back of Hannibal's neck. His grip was firm but reassuring, fingers massaging gently into the tense muscles there, offering a contrast to the intensity of what was to come. The gentle

pressure was meant to calm, to soothe, and to remind Hannibal that, no matter how rough this got, he was safe, protected.

He leaned down, pressing a soft kiss to Hannibal's forehead, a gesture that was as tender as it was possessive. The warmth of Hannibal's skin met Will's lips with a softness that belied the ferocity of their desire. The act of kissing him there, in such a vulnerable spot, was Will's way of acknowledging the depth of trust Hannibal had placed in him, of rewarding him for finally voicing his desires so clearly.

"Now," Will added, his voice deepening, the commanding edge returning as he straightened, "open up and take what's yours."

For a moment, the room was filled with nothing but the sound of their breathing, heavy and charged. Hannibal's body tensed, his lips parting slightly as he anticipated what was coming. Then, with a slow, deliberate movement, he took Will into his mouth, his lips closing around the tip with reverence. The wet heat of his mouth enveloped Will in a sensation that sent a shudder of pleasure coursing through his body.

The velvety smoothness of Hannibal's tongue moved with calculated precision, each languid stroke a practiced dance designed to draw out Will's pleasure, to coax him closer to the edge. Hannibal's movements were slow, deliberate, his tongue tracing the underside of Will's cock with an intimacy that spoke of familiarity. He took his time, savoring each inch as if it were a feast meant only for him. The wet heat of his mouth, the careful way his lips sealed around Will, created a suction that sent jolts of pleasure straight to the core of Will's being, making him groan with need.

Will's breath caught, his body reacting instinctively to the intoxicating mix of heat and wetness, the way Hannibal's mouth molded perfectly around him. The slow, deliberate pace was maddening, each movement a calculated tease that made Will's muscles tense with pleasure. His eyes fluttered shut as he surrendered to the sensation, his mind narrowing to the singular, overwhelming pleasure of Hannibal's mouth on him.

But as the pleasure coursed through him, Will felt his control slipping, the carefully maintained restraint unraveling at the edges. He didn't want to be gentle—knew Hannibal didn't want that either. Something fierce clawed at Will's insides, demanding to be unleashed. He wanted to break through the last vestiges of Hannibal's control, to push him to the brink. The thought alone sent a wave of possessiveness and aggression surging through Will, a need so deep and consuming that it left him breathless.

Every ounce of willpower was required to wrench himself back, to resist the overwhelming urge to thrust deeper into the hot, welcoming heat of Hannibal's mouth, to fuck him until they both shattered. His fingers tightened in Hannibal's hair, almost to the point of pain, trying to anchor himself against the tide of his own desire. He felt the edge of his restraint fraying, barely holding on as the temptation to let go, to fully claim what was his—

"Fuck—" The word slipped out unbidden, raw and ragged, vibrating through the thick, charged air between them. Will's breath came out in harsh, uneven bursts, his mind a blur of need and desire, every nerve ending screaming for release. He knew he had to pull back, knew that if he didn't, this would be over far too quickly.

With a swift, almost violent motion, Will yanked himself free from the intoxicating heat of Hannibal's mouth, the sudden emptiness leaving them both gasping for breath. Hannibal's lips parted in a soft whimper, his head instinctively tilting back, exposing the vulnerable line of his throat, the pale skin stretched taut as if offering itself up in silent supplication. The shift in his posture—a desperate arch, a subtle press of his hips—revealed how close he was, how deeply he craved more.

"Will… why did you…?" The words trailed off into the charged air, his voice cracking with the weight of his confusion and desperation. His brows furrowed, his lips parting as though searching for the right words, the right way to convey the turmoil swirling within him.

Will caught the flash of need in Hannibal's eyes, so intense it was almost heartbreaking. It was a vulnerability that cut through the usual layers of control, exposing a part of Hannibal that was rarely seen, let alone acknowledged. In that moment, Will's grip on Hannibal's hair tightened, but not out of dominance—this time, it was driven by a deep, protective instinct that surged up within him.

The hand that had gripped Hannibal's hair with such authoritative command loosened, the tension easing as Will's fingers began to comb gently through the strands. The careful movement provided a moment of unexpected tenderness, a silent reassurance that he was here, fully present, and that Hannibal's exposed need was safe with him. Will's thumb brushed along the nape of Hannibal's neck, feeling the rapid, shallow breaths beneath his fingertips, the way Hannibal's body trembled with a mix of anticipation and relief.

"I'm right here, darlin'," Will murmured, his voice firm but tinged with a hint of amusement, a soft smile pulling at the corners of his lips as he watched the way Hannibal's body responded to the sound. The warmth of Hannibal's skin beneath his fingers sent a pulse of satisfaction through Will, grounding him in the moment. "I'm not going anywhere."

Will's tone held a promise, and Hannibal's eyes fluttered shut for a brief moment, leaning back into Will's grip, the tension in his body easing slightly, his breath slowing, deepening as he took in the reassurance.

"I think you've had enough of a warm-up, don't you think?" Will's voice took on a darker, more commanding edge, the teasing note giving way to something more animalistic. The question hung in the air, and as Will watched the brief vulnerability in Hannibal's gaze shift, it was as if a switch had been flipped.

The uncertainty that had momentarily widened Hannibal's eyes narrowed into a sharp focus, the hunger in his gaze growing more intense, more insistent. The raw, wanton desire that filled those darkened eyes was unmistakable; the corners of Hannibal's lips curled up ever so slightly, a subtle acknowledgment of the pleasure-pain he was about to surrender to, the thrill of it lighting up his features in a way that made Will's pulse quicken.

"Good," Will whispered, his voice a growl as he leaned in. "Because I'm going to give you exactly what you need."

Will could see Hannibal bracing himself, the slight tension in his posture easing into something more pliant, more receptive. It was in that precise moment that Will recognized

Hannibal's full submission, the way his body seemed to give itself over completely, no longer holding back. The small, almost imperceptible quiver in Hannibal's lips was a dead giveaway, underscoring how he was right on the edge, teetering between control and the sweet release of surrender.

His voice softened, taking on a dark, pleased undertone that hinted at the satisfaction he felt. "That's it, Hannibal," Will whispered, his tone dripping with approval. "Such a good boy submitting to me."

A faint smile ghosted across Hannibal's lips at the praise, barely there, but enough to catch Will's attention. That subtle shift in Hannibal's expression—an almost involuntary reaction—ignited something powerful within Will. It was a mix of pride, possessiveness, and a deep affection that he couldn't quite name, but it was there, binding them close.

Allowing himself to linger in that feeling, Will let his hand glide down to the side of Hannibal's face. He could feel the warmth of Hannibal's skin beneath his palm, the heat rising from the tension simmering just below the surface. The sensation grounded him in the reality of what they were doing—of what Hannibal was willingly offering.

The tenderness of his touch transformed, giving way to a renewed purpose. Without warning, Will's fingers tightened in Hannibal's hair, the gentle caress morphing into a grip that was firm, possessive, demanding. He pulled Hannibal closer, guiding his cock back into the inviting warmth of Hannibal's mouth. This time, there was no hesitation. No teasing prelude. Only a deliberate thrust forward, a slow and steady push that gradually built in pressure as he pressed deeper, inching down Hannibal's throat.

The resistance was immediate. Hannibal's muscles tensed, a tight, constricting grip around Will as his body fought to adjust to the intrusion. The heat, the slickness—all of it enveloped Will, drowning him in a sensation that was both intense and overwhelming. He pressed further, taking more until he was buried deeper than before, until there was no more space to take.

Will's gaze remained fixed on Hannibal's face, his eyes drinking in every flicker of reaction. He watched the slight furrow in Hannibal's brow, the way his breath stalled when Will's cock nudged against the back of his throat, the way his throat contracted in response. It was a symphony of sensations, each one feeding Will's desire, each one pushing him to take Hannibal even further.

He could feel Hannibal's throat tightening around him, the muscles contracting and relaxing as they struggled to accommodate his cock. A guttural groan escaped Will's lips, rough and ragged, as the pleasure clawed at him, urging him on. "Fuck… just getting started… Let's see… how much you can take." His voice was strained, each word punctuated by the intense sensation coursing through him.

With a growl of determination, Will tightened his grip on the back of Hannibal's head, fingers threading through his hair to hold him steady. His other hand cupped Hannibal's jaw, securing him in place as Will began to thrust with a newfound force, each movement harsh, driven by the need to push both of them to the edge. He felt the resistance of Hannibal's

throat as he pushed deeper, the tight muscles convulsing around his cock, sending electric jolts up and down his spine.

Hannibal's body fought to adapt, each thrust met with a desperate constriction. His gag reflex kicked in, causing his throat to tighten around Will's cock in a way that was almost unbearable in its intensity. The slickness of Hannibal's saliva made each plunge smoother, wetter, the friction between them adding to the sensation that had Will's pulse hammering in his chest. Every spasm, every involuntary reaction from Hannibal only spurred Will on, his thrusts growing more demanding, more punishing.

The room filled with the obscene sounds of their bodies moving together—the wet, gagging breaths that Hannibal struggled to take, the slick slide of Will's cock as it fucked his throat with brutal determination. Each thrust drove deeper, the wet, suffocating heat of Hannibal's mouth and throat surrounding Will, pulling him in, making it impossible to hold back. Will's gaze dropped to the sight before him—Hannibal's eyes wide and watering, tears spilling over and trailing down his flushed cheeks as he fought to take everything Will gave him. The sight of Hannibal, normally so composed, reduced to this—kneeling, gasping, struggling—ignited something ruthless and possessive inside Will, a satisfaction that made his blood sing with power.

Hannibal's hands clung to Will's thighs, fingers digging in as if trying to ground himself, to hold onto something solid as Will took him apart. The tension in Hannibal's grip, the way his fingers flexed and tightened, was a clear sign of the struggle within him—the battle between instinct and the desperate desire to submit utterly.

"You're going to take every inch, aren't you?" Will growled, his tone rough and commanding. He didn't ease up, didn't give Hannibal a chance to adjust. Instead, he drove his cock down Hannibal's throat with relentless determination. The tight, spasming muscles of Hannibal's throat struggled to accommodate the intrusion, but Will pressed on, his desire to dominate overriding any concern for comfort.

Drool spilled from the corners of Hannibal's mouth, mingling with the tears that streaked down his flushed cheeks. The sight was deliciously debauched—Hannibal, usually so composed and in control, now reduced to this: ruined, desperate, and utterly at Will's mercy. Each wet, desperate noise that escaped Hannibal sent a savage surge of satisfaction through Will, a base pleasure in seeing Hannibal brought to this state of utter submission.

Will's thumb brushed across Hannibal's wet cheek, smearing the tears as he continued to fuck his throat with a merciless rhythm. The wet, choked sounds Hannibal made as he struggled to breathe only served to drive Will's arousal higher. He could feel Hannibal gagging around him, the tight constriction of his throat sending electric pulses of pleasure straight to Will's cock.

"You look so beautiful like this, Hannibal," Will murmured, his voice thick with arousal, the words almost a purr. "So desperate, so willing to be used."

Hannibal was nearing his limit; the way his body trembled, the way his breath stuttered around Will's cock, all signaled that he was teetering on the edge. With a calculated pull, Will withdrew slightly, giving Hannibal a fleeting moment to gasp for air, to pull in a desperate

breath, before slamming back in with brutal force. He drove himself to the hilt, holding himself there, relishing the sensation of being buried so deeply inside Hannibal. The heat, the tightness, the way Hannibal's throat clenched around him—it was a perfect, overwhelming pleasure. But it was more than just pleasure; it was a visceral claim, a tangible manifestation of the control Will wielded over the man beneath him.

Hannibal's entire body tensed, his throat spasming violently around Will, the reflexive gagging almost overwhelming. A surge of power rushed through Will at the sight—Hannibal, so often the one in control, now reduced to this raw state of submission. But Hannibal didn't pull away; instead, he leaned into it, offering up more of himself, his submission complete and unyielding. Every inch of his body was saying, 'Take me, I'm yours.'

Hannibal's face flushed deeply, the color rising in his cheeks as his body struggled for air. His nostrils flared with each shallow, desperate gasp, every breath a fight to pull in oxygen with Will buried so deeply in his throat. Will's gaze remained locked on him, watching every nuance of Hannibal's struggle—his need to please warring with his body's instinct to survive. The sight of Hannibal on the brink, his entire being focused on taking everything Will gave him, pushed Will closer to the edge, the need to dominate and claim searing through him. The more Hannibal gave, the more Will wanted to take, a relentless hunger gnawing at his restraint.

As Hannibal's throat tightened and convulsed around him, Will felt the full weight of Hannibal's surrender. This wasn't just physical; it was the total relinquishment of control, the ultimate act of trust. And with that trust came a responsibility that both thrilled and terrified Will. The realization hit Will like a jolt—Hannibal was offering him everything, not just his body, but his heart, his very soul. In that moment, Will knew he held something precious, something fragile, and the thought of breaking it made his chest tighten with a mix of fear and exhilaration. The depth of that trust, the sheer vulnerability it represented, sent a shiver down Will's spine, adding an electrifying edge to the pleasure already coursing through him.

Will's composure frayed, a raw, unfiltered need creeping into his voice, thick with arousal and admiration. "God, Hannibal… you were fucking made for this. To take me like this—so perfect." The words were a guttural growl, laced with possession, as Will felt himself teetering on the edge of control. But instead of surrendering to the mounting pressure in his body, he made a deliberate choice. With a rough, calculated pull, he withdrew, easing his cock out of Hannibal's throat just enough to give him a moment to breathe, to recover.

Hannibal gasped for air, his chest rising and falling in desperate heaves. But even as he sucked in breath through flared nostrils, the fire in his eyes remained undiminished—a burning need that hadn't cooled in the slightest. Will's heart pounded, both in response to the intensity of Hannibal's desire and the knowledge that he was the one who had pushed him to this point. Will's gaze flickered over him, drinking in the sight of his flushed skin, the tears that had gathered at the corners of his eyes, the glistening wetness on his lips.

Slowing his pace, Will delivered a few shallow thrusts, savoring the way Hannibal struggled to catch his breath, the way his body trembled with the effort. His voice, low and edged with vicious amusement, cut through the heavy air. "Catch your breath, Hannibal… can't have you passing out on me just yet."

Hannibal's chest heaved as he drew in desperate gulps of air, the strain visible in the rise and fall of his shoulders. But even as he fought for breath, Will caught the steely resolve hardening in Hannibal's eyes—a wordless declaration that he wasn't done, that he craved more. Defying the reprieve Will offered, Hannibal surprised him by leaning forward, driving himself down, desperate to take Will back into his throat, hungry for more despite the strain.

For a moment, Will paused, caught off guard by the sheer intensity of Hannibal's response. A flood of emotions rushed through him—admiration, pride, and a fierce, possessive love that tightened his chest as he realized what Hannibal was doing. Even after everything, despite the struggle, Hannibal was silently begging for more, pleading with his eyes, his body, for Will to take control again, to push him to his limits.

Hannibal's eyes, dark and desperate, locked onto Will's, conveying everything he couldn't say aloud. The need was clear, the desire to be claimed, to be dominated, written in every tense muscle, every ragged breath. And Will, feeling the full weight of that need, knew there was no turning back. Hannibal wanted more, craved it, and Will was more than willing to give it to him.

Will's voice was husky, a mix of authority and disbelief lacing his words. "You want me that badly, baby? Want my cock back in your throat so much you can't wait?"

His eyes shining with desperation and arousal, Hannibal silently urged Will to give him what he craved. The intensity of Hannibal's need, so raw and unguarded, nearly undid Will right then and there. The sheer enthusiasm in Hannibal's eyes, the absolute desire to please, was overwhelming, a heady rush that coursed through Will's veins like liquid fire.

Hannibal's gaze remained locked on Will, darkened with submission and want, a visual so intensely erotic, so deeply satisfying, that it took everything in Will not to let go, not to surrender to the overwhelming need pounding through his veins. He could feel the pressure building, the pleasure winding through him like a taut wire, his body betraying the razor-thin edge he was walking. The connection between them crackled with intensity, a live wire that threatened to consume them both if Will wasn't careful. But in that moment, he knew he wouldn't—couldn't—hold back much longer.

His breath caught in his throat as he tightened his grip around the base of his cock, almost painfully, in a desperate bid to stave off the orgasm that was dangerously close to overtaking him. A tremor ran through him, every muscle tensing as he fought against the tidal wave of pleasure looming on the horizon, ready to crash over him. The sight of Hannibal—eager, trembling, completely willing to be used—was almost too much. Each detail of the man before him added fuel to the fire raging inside him, pushing Will to the brink.

Will's vision blurred slightly, his focus narrowing to the singular point of Hannibal—his need, his submission, his absolute willingness to be taken. Will could barely hold himself back from slamming forward, from driving into that intoxicating heat and losing himself completely. His knuckles whitened as he gripped the base of his cock, the pressure a grounding force, a lifeline keeping him from tumbling over the edge too soon.

Panting, Will smirked, feeling the rush of power at Hannibal's plea. His voice dropped to a near growl, "You know if I take you like that again, I'm going to come down your throat."

Hannibal's pupils dilated further, the hunger in his gaze intensifying at Will's words. The thought of it—the thought of taking everything Will had to offer—seemed to spur Hannibal on. His body instinctively leaned forward, mouth parting slightly, as if the very idea of being used, of being claimed so completely, was almost too much to bear. He didn't need to say anything; his entire being radiated a wordless plea, urging Will to give in, to take him and give him exactly what they both craved.

Unable to resist the sight before him, Will's grip tightened in Hannibal's hair, fingers threading through the strands with a possessive force. He guided him back down, deeper than before, the sensation of being swallowed whole, of Hannibal's throat constricting around him with each desperate gulp, sent shivers down Will's spine. His body thrummed with the imminent release he was barely holding back, the pressure within him mounting to an almost unbearable pitch with each passing second. The wet heat of Hannibal's mouth, the way it stretched and squeezed around his cock, was pushing Will to the brink, every moment a perfect blend of control and surrender.

"That's it, Hannibal," Will growled, his voice rough and thick with lust. His words were a command, every syllable dripping with the urgency of his need. "Take it all… I'm so fucking close." The raw need in his tone left no doubt—release was bearing down on him, unstoppable and inevitable.

The pressure built rapidly, an unstoppable force driving Will's hips with purpose as he thrust into Hannibal's willing throat. Every sound was heightened—the wet slide of skin against skin, the strangled gasps for air, the low, animalistic grunts that escaped Will's lips with each deep thrust. The tight coil of pleasure in Will's gut tightened to an unbearable point, every movement bringing him closer to the precipice. His rhythm became erratic, the need to finish, to claim what was his, overtaking all else.

With a final, powerful thrust, Will buried himself deep in Hannibal's throat, his control shattering as the tension finally snapped. A wave of raw, electrifying pleasure crashed over him, his entire body tensing with the intensity of it as he surrendered to the orgasm. Will's hips jerked forward involuntarily, a harsh, guttural moan ripping from his throat as the release tore through him, each pulse sending shocks of ecstasy through his system. His vision blurred, muscles trembling with the force of his climax as he emptied himself deep within Hannibal's yielding throat.

Despite the intensity, Hannibal took it all, his throat working diligently to swallow every drop, each convulsion of his muscles adding a new wave of sensation that nearly unraveled Will all over again. The way Hannibal's body instinctively responded, the way he accepted everything Will gave him without hesitation, was a monument to the depth of his submission, his unwavering devotion laid bare.

The warmth of Hannibal's mouth lingered, a soothing balm against the sensitivity of Will's skin. The soft, wet heat that remained where they had just been connected sent a final shiver down his spine. The sight of Hannibal's flushed face and swollen lips kept the embers of Will's pleasure smoldering. The aftershocks of their shared intensity still hummed between them, the air thick with the remnants of their passion.

With deliberate care, Will gently withdrew, each movement slow and measured, savoring the way Hannibal's lips clung to him for just a moment longer. His eyes never left Hannibal's face, drinking in the sight of his lover's flushed cheeks and the subtle tremors that still coursed through his body—a lingering indication of the overwhelming pleasure they had just shared.

Without breaking that gaze, Will tucked himself back into his pants with practiced ease, though he left them unbuckled and unzipped, the act almost automatic. His focus remained entirely on Hannibal, a sense of pride and deep satisfaction swelling within him as he took in the sight of his lover—so thoroughly ravished, so beautifully vulnerable.

Hannibal looked breathtaking—his lips swollen and slightly parted, his breath coming in soft, uneven puffs. A small sound, almost a whimper, escaped his throat as he tried to steady his breathing. His eyes were half-lidded and glazed with a mix of satisfaction and lingering need. His hair, usually meticulously groomed, was now deliciously disheveled, the strands falling messily across his forehead, sticking slightly where sweat had dampened them. The once sharp lines of his clothing were now softened, rumpled, as if his suit had become a part of his body, molded to the tension that still thrummed beneath his skin. The top few buttons of his shirt were undone, revealing the smooth skin of his collarbone, which glistened faintly with sweat, the light catching on it in a way that made Will's breath stutter slightly.

The rawness of Hannibal's need, the way he had surrendered himself so completely, filled Will with a warmth that spread through his chest, mingling with the lingering afterglow of their passion. It was more than just physical gratification; it was the profound connection that bound them together, a shared understanding that went far beyond words. Will let the moment stretch, the intensity of what they had just experienced settling between them like a comforting weight.

Will reached out, his fingers brushing gently against Hannibal's collarbone, tracing the line of his exposed skin with a tenderness that belied the intensity of what had just passed between them. His touch was soft, reverent, as if he were handling something fragile, precious. He was committing this moment to memory, cherishing the sight of Hannibal in this rare state of unguarded vulnerability.

"Hannibal," Will murmured, his voice barely above a whisper, heavy with a mixture of affection and awe. The word felt inadequate, too small to encompass the enormity of what he felt. Instead, he let his touch speak for him, his fingers continuing their gentle exploration, offering comfort and grounding them both.

As his hand trailed along Hannibal's skin, he felt the warmth and the slight tremble that hadn't yet subsided. A fierce surge of possessiveness welled up inside him, a primal need to claim and protect the man before him. The desire to shield Hannibal from everything, even the world itself, roared within him. He wanted to worship Hannibal, to honor him with the same intensity that Hannibal had shown in his submission.

Hannibal remained kneeling, his body trembling slightly as he slowly came down from the overwhelming experience of having Will take control so completely. Each tremor in Hannibal's frame resonated through Will, a physical reminder of the power they had just exchanged. Will watched with rapt attention, captivated by the way the initial wave of

satisfaction in Hannibal's eyes began to fade, giving way to something much more raw, much more desperate.

There was a flicker of something unfulfilled, a need that had been momentarily quieted but not extinguished. As Hannibal slowly returned to himself, the evidence of his arousal became impossible for Will to ignore. His breath came in uneven, shaky gasps, and his hips began to shift with a subtle, restless urgency. His movements were small at first—a slight roll of his hips, a quiet, involuntary grind against the air—seeking friction, seeking release. It was as if Hannibal's body couldn't help but chase the sensation that had been denied, his need clawing its way to the surface, demanding attention.

Hannibal's body moved with a growing desperation, the tension coiling tighter with each passing moment. He squirmed against the floor, his movements becoming more pronounced, more insistent. His hands gripped the edge of Will's pants, not to steady himself, but as if anchoring his body in the hope of finding some relief. The way his thighs clenched and shifted, the way his hips subtly lifted and fell, almost as though seeking out Will's touch, sent a jolt of heat through Will, igniting something instinctive within him. That need called to Will, demanding a response, urging him to finish what they had started.

He could see the desperate strain of Hannibal's erection pressing against the fabric of his slacks, the outline hard and unyielding. Hannibal's legs twitched, restless and needy, as he sought any kind of friction, his desperation lewd and almost pitiful. The satisfaction Will had felt moments ago was now layered with something darker, a deep, possessive desire to finally give Hannibal the release he so clearly craved. The way Hannibal looked up at him, eyes dark and pleading, only intensified that need.

"You did so well, Hannibal," Will murmured, his voice soft and soothing, a gentle caress against the charged air between them. His hand moved with purpose, fingers brushing tenderly along Hannibal's jawline, feeling the warmth of his flushed skin. Will's tone grew more seductive, a vicious edge slipping into his voice as he leaned in closer, letting his breath ghost over Hannibal's ear. "But don't worry, I'm not done with you yet."

Will's hand, still resting gently on Hannibal's jaw, tightened slightly, his thumb moving deliberately as it traced the line of Hannibal's cheekbone. The warmth of Hannibal's skin beneath his touch was intoxicating, each small movement of Will's thumb eliciting a soft, involuntary gasp from Hannibal. The sound sent a shiver of pleasure straight through Will, making his hips twitch forward.

With a sudden, commanding yank, Will hauled Hannibal up from his kneeling position, their bodies colliding in a brutal kiss. It was hungry, fierce, and anything but gentle. Hannibal's lips, already swollen and abused from earlier, felt bruised and pliant against Will's. The softness of them yielded under the onslaught of Will's mouth. Their kiss was filthy, their mouths moving together in a rhythm of pure possession. Will could taste the remnants of his own arousal on Hannibal's tongue, a bitter-salt tang that was a visceral reminder of how completely Hannibal had surrendered.

As Will's tongue invaded Hannibal's mouth with fierce, possessive hunger, he could feel Hannibal trembling against him. The need for release was so potent that it practically vibrated

off him. Hannibal's hands, which had been obediently resting at his sides, suddenly fisted in Will's shirt. The grip was so tight the fabric strained under the pressure, threatening to tear.

There was nothing refined or composed about the way Hannibal clung to Will—this was pure, frantic desperation, a wild hunger that had Hannibal's fingers digging into Will's skin through the cloth, as if trying to physically anchor himself to the reality of Will's presence. His hips jerked forward with a force that was almost violent, grinding against Will with a visceral intensity that bordered on feral. He was begging for release with every movement, but Will refused to grant it.

Hannibal's moans, muffled by the brutal kiss, were desperate and raw. Each sound was soaked in untamed need, tinged with a pleading edge that revealed just how close he was to shattering. The noises coming from his throat were guttural, animalistic cries that vibrated against Will's mouth. Every gasp, every ragged breath, was a visceral plea for the release he was being denied. His movements turned frantic, his hips thrusting forward with an urgency that was shameless, obscene in its intensity, each grind against Will a relentless pursuit of pleasure.

But Will wasn't about to relinquish control—not now, not when he had Hannibal right where he wanted him. With a low, dangerous growl that reverberated through their joined mouths, Will bit down on Hannibal's lower lip, the sharp sting of pain slicing through the haze of pleasure like a knife, a brutal reminder of who was in charge.

Hannibal's body went rigid as the sudden pain registered, his breath hitching in a ragged gasp. But instead of calming him, the pain only stoked the fire within him, fanning the flames of his arousal until it burned even hotter. His hips bucked harder against Will, every thrust more frenzied than the last. His breath came in harsh, uneven gasps as he fought to hold onto the last remnants of his composure. It was a losing battle. Each movement drove him closer to the edge, and the closer he got, the more feral his actions became, his mind clouded by the overwhelming, all-consuming need to come.

Will pulled back slightly, just enough to speak, his grip on Hannibal's jaw tightening cruelly as he forced him to meet his gaze. "Have you forgotten so quickly, Hannibal?" Will's voice was a dark, dangerous whisper, his breath hot against Hannibal's swollen, bruised lips. "You'll get what you want, but only when I decide. Not a second before."

Hannibal's only response was a desperate, broken whimper. His eyes were wide, pleading, the need in them so intense it was almost painful to witness. He continued to grind against Will, his movements frantic, uncontrollable. The composed, calculating man was gone, leaving only raw, primal desperation—laid bare, exposed for Will to command.

With a swift motion, Will gripped Hannibal's hips with bruising force and forcibly stilled his movements, holding him in place with a strength that brooked no argument. Hannibal's body strained against the hold, his breath hitching in frustration as he tried to push forward, only to be met with unyielding resistance. The helplessness in his gaze deepened, a flicker of something almost like panic crossing his features as he realized just how completely, utterly in control Will was, and how much he was at Will's mercy.

Will leaned in close, his lips brushing against the shell of Hannibal's ear, hot breath ghosting over his flushed skin as he spoke. His voice was low, dark, dripping with authority and something more wicked. "You have a choice," he murmured, the words rolling off his tongue with a filthy, seductive edge, each syllable a caress that sent a shiver down Hannibal's spine. "You can come right now, grinding against my thigh like the desperate, needy slut you are… and then we're done for the night."

Hannibal's eyes squeezed shut, a guttural whimper escaping his lips as he fought to control himself, to resist the urge to take the quick, humiliating relief Will was dangling before him.

"Or…" Will's grip tightened on Hannibal's hips, his fingers digging in deeper, the pressure enough to send a jolt of pain mixed with pleasure through Hannibal's body, driving home the point that Will was in complete control. "You can wait. Be a good boy, and you'll come when I decide you're ready."

He let the words hang in the air, the tension between them thick and suffocating, as he savored the way Hannibal's jaw clenched, the way his body trembled, every muscle straining with the effort of holding himself back. Then, almost as an afterthought, Will added with a sinister chuckle, "I was hoping to get two orgasms out of you tonight, but if you're that desperate…" His voice trailed off, the implication hanging in the air like a wicked tease, the idea of multiple orgasms meant to send a fresh wave of heat through Hannibal's already overwrought body.

Hannibal's entire body stiffened, caught between the tantalizing promise of more and the humiliating lure of immediate, base relief. Will watched him agonize over the choice, every nuance of Hannibal's indecision written in the tense lines of his body—the way his fingers flexed, clutching at Will's clothing as if searching for some kind of anchor, the way his hips stuttered, caught in the rhythm of an aborted thrust as he battled the overwhelming urge to take what was being offered. His jaw clenched, the muscles in his neck straining as he swallowed hard, the sound loud and almost desperate in the thick silence of the room.

Finally, with a low, broken groan, Hannibal's eyes fluttered open, the dark, desperate need in them unmistakable as he whispered, "I'll wait." The words were barely audible, his voice rough, wrecked, the sound of a man on the brink of breaking.

Will's lips curved into a slow, predatory smirk, a surge of triumph tightening his chest as Hannibal yielded, offering up his pleasure like a gift. "Good boy," he purred, his voice a low, velvety rasp, the words dripping with approval, each syllable a dark, seductive guarantee of both reward and exquisite torment. He leaned in, his breath searing against Hannibal's ear, the growl in his throat a command that vibrated with unspoken intent. "Desk. Now."

As Hannibal pushed himself off the ground, his movements were slightly uncoordinated, his body still trembling with the aftershocks of denied pleasure. Will followed him like a predator, stalking him, allowing no distance to form between them. His eyes were locked on the graceful lines of Hannibal's back as he obeyed, muscles shifting beneath his skin. The predatory satisfaction that thrummed through Will's veins only grew stronger, fueled by the tautness in Hannibal's body, a visible reminder of the unspent desire that still coursed through him, his cock straining against the fabric of his pants.

There was no time for Hannibal to settle. The moment his ass touched the edge of the desk, Will was on him, hands gripping his hips with bruising force, fingers digging in possessively as he practically manhandled him into position. Hannibal's legs hung off the side of the desk, spread wide, the vulnerable position making his already desperate state even more apparent. His breathing came in ragged bursts, as he leaned back on his hands, palms pressing into the surface of the desk, muscles tensing as he settled in.

Despite having just found release, Will's need had returned with a vengeance, his cock already thickening at the sight before him, stirring with renewed interest. But he knew it wasn't time—not yet. Hannibal's pleasure was the focus now, wringing every last drop of control from him until nothing remained but pure, unadulterated need. Starved for it, Will could feel the hunger in his veins, anticipation making his mouth water, every nerve alight with the desire to devour the man laid out before him.

The desperation etched into Hannibal's gaze flicked up to meet Will's, dark and pleading, pupils blown wide with want. His lips, already swollen from their earlier kiss, glistened as he licked them, an instinctive, subconscious plea for more. Will's attention didn't miss the slight quiver in Hannibal's thighs, nor the subtle shifting of his hips, his body writhing, desperate for any friction, any relief from the throbbing ache that consumed him.

For a moment, Will simply drank in the sight—the way Hannibal was so perfectly undone, so completely at his mercy, spread out and begging without a word. The power coursing through Will was intoxicating, a heady rush that made his blood pound in his ears, his cock throbbing with the urge to claim what was his. His teeth itched to sink into Hannibal's flesh, to mark him as his own. Each twitch of Hannibal's muscles, every movement that betrayed his desperation, fed Will's desire to push him further, to take him apart piece by trembling piece until there was nothing left but raw, unfiltered want, reducing him to the purest essence of need.

"Look at you," Will murmured, his voice a low, savage rumble that reverberated through the room, sending an unmistakable shiver down Hannibal's spine. Will's hands slid up Hannibal's thighs with deliberate intent, feeling the tension coiled tight beneath the surface, ready to snap. "So fucking eager… so needy."

Without waiting for a response, Will's hands moved with purpose, reaching for Hannibal's jacket. The fabric resisted slightly as Will ripped it off with a savage tug, the sound of tearing fabric punctuating the air. Hannibal's chest rose and fell in rapid, shallow breaths, his body trembling as he watched Will's determined movements. The vest followed, buttons scattering as Will yanked it open with little regard for the expensive tailoring. The tie was next, yanked free in a quick, fluid motion before being discarded in a haphazard pile on the desk chair.

Hannibal's shirt was the final barrier, the crisp fabric now wrinkled and disheveled as Will's fingers made quick work of the buttons, slipping them free with practiced ease. Will's movements were rough, almost feral himself, as he peeled the shirt from Hannibal's body. The cool air hit Hannibal's exposed skin, and a visible shudder ran through him, his muscles tensing under the sudden chill. Hannibal's head dropped back instinctively, the motion forcing his chest out, the taut lines of his torso on full display. His posture conveyed a clear

surrender, his body offered up, bared fully to Will's gaze, yielding to the hunger that radiated from Will's every touch.

As the last of Hannibal's clothes fell away, Will's eyes devoured the sight before him, his gaze roving hungrily over the exposed expanse of skin. The muscles in Hannibal's chest and abdomen flexed under his predatory gaze, every inch of him laid bare, ready to be taken. A low, involuntary moan escaped Will's lips, thick with want, as he drank in the sight of Hannibal's bare flesh. The smooth, pale skin practically begged to be marked, claimed, ravaged. The ache in Will's teeth intensified, a deep, primal urge to bite down, to pierce the skin and leave his mark on the man who had surrendered himself so completely. He could already taste the salt of Hannibal's skin on his tongue, imagine the give of muscle and flesh beneath his teeth, the mere thought sending a shudder through his body, cock twitching with renewed interest.

As Will was distracted by the feast in front of him, Hannibal's hands, desperate and trembling, moved to frantically scramble at the buttons of Will's shirt, fingers fumbling in his haste. His touch was frantic, almost clumsy in its urgency, the usual grace of his movements lost in the haze of his desperation. But before he could make any real progress, Will batted away Hannibal's hands with a firm but gentle motion, capturing them with his own.

Hannibal's eyes widened slightly, a soft whine escaping his lips, the sound filled with frustration and need. His fingers twitched in Will's grip, the involuntary movement betraying his desire to continue, but there was no resistance as Will pinned his hands gently against the desk. Hannibal's breath faltered, his chest heaving as his eyes locked onto Will's, dark and pleading.

A wolfish smirk curled at the corners of Will's lips as he leaned in closer, his breath ghosting hot against the shell of Hannibal's ear. "That's it," he whispered, his voice a dark, velvet rasp that thrummed through the air between them. "Let me take care of you."

Will's hand dipped into the pile of discarded clothing, his fingers brushing over the smooth, familiar texture of silk—the tie that had once adorned Hannibal's throat. The once dignified accessory was now destined for something far more debased, more intimate. He brought the tie into Hannibal's line of vision, holding it just close enough for the material to glint in the dim light. His pupils dilated until the faint maroon of his irises was swallowed by inky blackness, his entire body freezing in place, muscles tensing with a potent mix of anticipation and surrender.

Will's voice dropped lower, the sound rumbling through his chest as he asked, "Do you trust me?"

A sharp, almost frantic nod, was Hannibal's response, his breath escaping in shallow, rapid pants. The trust he was placing in Will, the willingness to give up the last shred of his control, was written in every taut line of his body, in the way his hands trembled slightly as they remained pinned to the desk.

Without breaking the intense eye contact, Will brought the silk tie up, teasingly brushing it against Hannibal's cheek, feeling the slight tremor that ran through his body at the contact. Then, with slow, deliberate movements, Will wrapped the tie around Hannibal's head,

completely blindfolding him. The fabric clung to the contours of Hannibal's face, plunging him into a void of darkness, where every other sense was heightened to an unbearable degree. Will took his time, ensuring the tie was snug but not too tight, savoring the way Hannibal's was left vulnerable and acutely aware of every touch, every sound, every shift in the air between them.

Hannibal's lips parted slightly, a soft, involuntary sound escaping them—a whimper of both submission and arousal. His hands twitched again, the restraint in his posture a visible manifestation of his internal struggle to remain still, to give himself over completely to Will's control. The blindfold wasn't just a physical barrier; it was a psychological one, stripping away the comfort of sight, leaving Hannibal to rely solely on Will's guidance, his every movement now dictated by the man who held the power over him.

Will's eyes gleamed with ruthless satisfaction as he watched Hannibal's restraint unravel, the subtle quivers of his hands, the uneven rise and fall of his chest with each ragged breath. With a firm shove, he pushed Hannibal back until his spine met the cool, hard surface of the desk. The impact jolted through Hannibal, forcing a sharp gasp from his lips, his back arching as the cold wood pressed into his flesh. Will didn't relent, following him down, draping himself over Hannibal, their bodies melding together, the heat of Hannibal's bare skin searing through Will's clothes. He could feel every tremor that coursed through Hannibal, every desperate shift of his hips as he adjusted to the new position, the edge of the desk digging into his back, a grounding point in the overwhelming sensation.

He dipped his head, lips brushing against the tender spot just below Hannibal's ear, where the pulse beat furiously beneath the surface. The delicate skin there was almost translucent, a perfect target for what Will intended. He whispered, "You're mine, Hannibal," his breath hot against that vulnerable stretch of flesh. "All mine."

The words hung in the air, their weight pressing down on Will, driving him forward. The sight of Hannibal's exposed throat, the way the pulse quickened beneath the delicate skin, became too much to resist. The pale expanse of skin, so vulnerable, so inviting, called out to Will's deepest instincts, and before he could stop himself, he was already moving, his restraint shattering under the weight of his desire. His mouth latched onto Hannibal's throat with a savage hunger, his lips and tongue working feverishly against the sensitive area. The rapid thrum of Hannibal's pulse beneath the thin skin, the way it quickened as Will's teeth bit down, sent a rush of power surging through him. The low, guttural groan that rumbled from Hannibal's chest vibrated against Will's mouth, a sound born of both pain and pleasure that only fueled Will's ferocity.

Muscles tensing as though he was caught between pain and pleasure, Hannibal's body arched off the desk, pressing his throat harder into Will's mouth, as if offering himself up for more. The hands that had been gripping the edge of the desk now fisted in the air, fingers curling and uncurling in a desperate search for something—anything—to hold onto. The noises that escaped his lips were animalistic, raw, somewhere between a gasp and a moan, a sound steeped in pure, unfiltered need. Will could feel Hannibal's pulse racing against his tongue, the erratic rhythm mirroring the frantic rise and fall of Hannibal's chest as he struggled to cling to the last remnants of his control.

Each mark Will left was a claim, a dark bruise forming a possessive ring around Hannibal's throat, a visible reminder of who he belonged to. The faint taste of copper tinged his tongue as he bit down harder, the sharp metallic flavor mingling with the salty tang of sweat and flesh, making his blood sing with the thrill of ownership. Low growls rumbled from deep in Will's chest, vibrating through the air like an animal marking its territory. Each growl was followed by the obscene, wet sounds of his mouth working feverishly against Hannibal's neck, the mix of suction and teeth creating a symphony of debauchery that filled the room. Beneath him, Hannibal's body writhed with a desperate, almost frantic need, his hips bucking upward in a futile attempt to find relief from the maddening pleasure-pain. Each bite, each bruise, pushed him closer to the brink, closer to the edge of his sanity, where only Will's touch could pull him back.

As Will sucked bruises into Hannibal's skin—under his chin, over his collarbones, everywhere he could reach—there was nothing gentle about his touch, only a raw, consuming hunger that drove him to mark every inch of skin within reach. His hands roamed down Hannibal's torso with a possessive intensity, the tips of his fingers grazing the skin with a deliberate roughness. Each touch was sharp, as if Will's hands were claiming territory, staking their claim over Hannibal's body.

Hannibal's voice, usually so measured and controlled, was now reduced to a series of broken, incoherent pleas. "Please… more… Will… need you…" The words tumbled out of his mouth in a desperate, breathless mix of gasps and moans, barely forming into anything recognizable as language. "God, please… I can't… I need—" His body arched into Will's touch, trembling with the need for more—more pain, more pleasure, more of everything that Will had to give. "Please… don't stop… please…" But it wasn't enough—Hannibal's begging, no matter how frantic, was lost in the haze of his own desperation.

Will paused, his lips brushing against the bruised skin of Hannibal's neck, savoring the taste of the man beneath him. "You'll need to use your words, Hannibal," Will murmured, his voice a low, seductive growl that vibrated against Hannibal's skin. "Tell me what you want." The command was clear, a demand for clarity in the midst of the overwhelming need that threatened to consume them both.

Will's fingers traced the contours of Hannibal's muscles with a fierce, deliberate precision, following the ridges of his ribs, the tense plane of his abdomen, and the frantic rise and fall of his chest. The roughness in Will's touch was no accident, each stroke designed to inflame the desire simmering just beneath Hannibal's skin, to push him closer and closer to the brink of surrender. He purposefully avoided the most sensitive areas, his hands dragging slowly across Hannibal's sides, dipping into the hollows of his hips with a firm, possessive grip before trailing back up to his chest.

Hannibal's muscles tensed under Will's fingertips, the strain a clear sign of his unbearable arousal and the sheer depth of his need. There was a helplessness in the way his body responded, a total surrender to the sensations Will was creating. The gasp that left Hannibal's lips was half-moan, half-whimper, a sound that revealed just how much he craved more of Will's touch, more of his dominance.

Will felt Hannibal's hand slide up to the back of his head, fingers threading through his hair with an urgency that didn't go unnoticed. The grip tightened, almost frantic, as Hannibal tried to guide Will's head lower, wordlessly begging for more. It was clear to Will just how desperate Hannibal was, his body practically screaming for the touch that would finally push him over the edge.

Will responded with a particularly sharp nip around Hannibal's collarbone, the bite hard enough to make Hannibal's entire body jolt. A breathless gasp escaped his lips, his chest arching up into the sharp sting as Will grabbed Hannibal's wandering hands, shoving them roughly above his head. The motion was quick, almost punishing, the force of it driving home the message that Will was in control here, and Hannibal was going to remember that.

"Stay," Will ordered, his voice a low, dangerous rumble that brooked no argument. He felt Hannibal's fingers twitch above his head, his wrists twisting slightly in Will's grasp, but there was no real resistance. Hannibal was submitting, just as Will wanted.

Leaning in closer, Will let his breath ghost over Hannibal's ear, the proximity intensifying the tension between them. "What did I just say about using your words, Hannibal?" Will whispered, his tone carrying the weight of a warning. He could sense the hesitation in Hannibal, the momentary pause as he struggled with his urge to push back.

When Hannibal didn't immediately respond, Will's grip on his wrists tightened, his voice dropping to a harsher whisper. "Do you need me to stop?" The question was both a threat and a test, the power behind it evident in the way Will's fingers dug into Hannibal's skin, holding him firmly in place.

Will felt Hannibal go still beneath him, his breath shallow, almost desperate as he realized Will might actually pull away. The thought seemed to send a wave of panic through him, and Will watched with satisfaction as Hannibal quickly shook his head, his lips parting to speak, but no sound coming out.

An untamed smirk tugged at Will's lips, satisfaction curling in his chest as he observed the mounting desperation in Hannibal's body. "Then you know what to do. Use. Your. Words."

Finally, Hannibal's voice broke free, the words tumbling out in a breathless rush. "Please, Will, don't stop. I need you. I need more. Please."

Will's smirk widened, his voice dropping to a low, commanding tone as his hand slid down Hannibal's chest, tracing the hard lines of his muscles with deliberate slowness. His fingers paused at Hannibal's stomach, the tips brushing just above the waistband of his pants. "More specific, Hannibal. Tell me exactly what you want." The demand was laced with a cruel edge, a savage pleasure in making Hannibal spell out his needs, in forcing him to surrender even more.

Hannibal's breath hitched, his chest heaving as he struggled to form the words, the humiliation and arousal warring within him. His body trembled with the effort, the desperation audible as he tried to push past the lump in his throat. "Will, please… I…" His voice cracked, nearly reduced to tears by the sheer intensity of his need. "I want you to touch me… touch my cock… please…" The words were barely more than a broken whisper, each

one dragged out of him with painful effort, but the vulnerability in his voice sent a jolt of satisfaction through Will.

Will's grip on Hannibal's wrists tightened, his smirk turning into something darker, more possessive. "That's it," he murmured, his voice thick with approval as his hand moved lower, finally brushing over the hard, aching length trapped beneath Hannibal's slacks. He applied just enough pressure to make Hannibal gasp, his body jerking at the contact. "Tell me what you need, baby." The sight of Hannibal, so desperate, so needy, was intoxicating, and Will reveled in the power he held, in the way he could make Hannibal beg for even the slightest touch.

Will's hand moved with excruciating slowness, teasing Hannibal as he palmed the hard length through the fabric, his touch just light enough to drive Hannibal mad with want. "Is this what you wanted?" Will asked, his tone dripping with amusement as he felt Hannibal buck against his hand, a strangled moan escaping his lips.

Hannibal's response was a garbled mess of words, a desperate attempt to convey how much he needed more, how much he needed Will. "Please… yes… more… I need…" His voice trailed off into a low, broken whimper, his hips straining upwards in a futile attempt to get more of the contact he craved.

"Good boy," Will purred, his voice a dangerous caress as he finally relented, sliding down Hannibal's body, his lips trailing heat across the sensitive skin of Hannibal's chest. The path of his mouth was slow, each kiss and lick designed to make Hannibal feel every inch of his descent. When Will reached Hannibal's nipples, he paused, the dusky peaks already stiff and aching from arousal. Will's mouth hovered just above one, the heat of his breath fanning over the sensitive flesh, sending a shiver through Hannibal's body. He lingered there, teasing, until the tension was almost unbearable, before finally dipping down to suck the nipple between his lips.

His tongue flicked out, swirling around the hardened nub, tasting the salt of Hannibal's skin as he sucked it deeper into his mouth. Will's teeth grazed it lightly, the sensation sharp enough to draw a low, shuddering moan from Hannibal, his body arching up into the touch, desperate for more. Hannibal's hands jerked towards Will's head, fingers twitching as if to tangle in Will's hair and hold him closer, but he caught himself at the last second, a strangled whimper escaping his lips as he forced his hands back to where Will had placed them.

Will noticed the restraint, the effort it took for Hannibal to follow his command, and a dark, satisfied smile curled his lips. As a reward for his obedience, Will obliged the unspoken desire, bringing his other hand up to pinch the neglected nipple between his fingers. He rolled it between his thumb and forefinger, gradually increasing the pressure until the sensation danced on the edge of pain, the line between pleasure and agony blurring deliciously. The sound that tore from Hannibal's throat was a mix of a gasp and a groan, his breaths coming in ragged, uneven bursts as the dual assault on his nipples sent jolts of electric pleasure straight to his cock.

Will finally released Hannibal's nipples, leaving them flushed and tender, before continuing his descent. His hands roamed down Hannibal's sides, feeling the muscles twitch and tremble beneath his touch, until his face was level with Hannibal's groin. The bulge straining against

the fabric of Hannibal's slacks was impossible to miss, the evidence of his arousal so blatant, so desperate, that Will couldn't help but smirk.

He let his hand hover over the hardness trapped within, his fingers barely brushing the fabric, the lightest of touches that was more tease than anything else. Hannibal's response was a sharp intake of breath followed by a breathless, needy moan of Will's name. His hips bucked up involuntarily, seeking more pressure, more contact, but Will was quick to pull back, leaving him on the edge of desperation.

"Look at you," Will murmured, his voice dripping with amusement, "so needy, and I've barely even touched you."

Will's fingers ghosted over the bulge in Hannibal's slacks, teasing the sensitive flesh beneath, but never giving enough to satisfy. "You're so fucking hard, Hannibal," Will growled, his voice thick with arousal. "Is this what you wanted? To be on the brink, begging for me?" His hand pressed down just enough to feel the throbbing heat, before easing away again, the touch so fleeting it left Hannibal's cock twitching in response, aching for more.

The frustrated whimper that escaped Hannibal was almost pitiful, a sound of pure, unadulterated need. "Please… I need… fuck, Will, I'm so close…" His voice was strained, choked with the desperation that threatened to break him, his entire body trembling with the effort to hold himself together.

With a chuckle, Will's fingers danced over the button of Hannibal's slacks, his touch deliberate, savoring the moment before he slowly dragged the zipper down. The metallic sound cut through the room, each click sending a shiver through both of them. As the zipper reached its end, Will tugged the slacks down to Hannibal's thighs, exposing him, but leaving him tantalizingly covered by the thin, silky fabric of his briefs.

The sight was enough to make Will's mouth water—the outline of Hannibal's cock, hard and insistent against the delicate fabric, was impossible to ignore. A damp spot had already formed where precome had soaked through, a visible testament to Hannibal's arousal, and the sight alone was enough to make Will's own cock throb with need. But he was patient, his focus singular and intense, every thought centered on the man laid out before him.

Will inhaled deeply, letting the intoxicating scent of Hannibal's arousal flood his senses, the heady mix of musk and the faint tang of sweat sending a fresh wave of desire crashing through him. His breath ghosted over the thin fabric as he lowered his head, lips brushing lightly over the hard length trapped beneath the silk, and Will was rewarded as Hannibal's cock twitched against Will's mouth, straining against the barrier that kept them apart.

Tongue darting out, he traced the swollen head through the briefs, the taste of fabric mingling with the tang of arousal as he sucked lightly, just enough to feel the shape of Hannibal's cock against his tongue. The silk was damp with precome, clinging to the contours of Hannibal's erection, and Will's mouth worked over it with slow, deliberate pressure, his teeth grazing ever so slightly as he mouthed his way down the length of it, savoring the way the soft fabric slipped against his lips.

Above him, Hannibal's head banged back against the desk with a dull thud, the sound almost drowned out by the sharp gasp that tore from his throat. The force of it reverberated through his body, sending a violent shudder through every muscle as the teasing pressure of Will's mouth threatened to unravel him completely. Hannibal's breath came in ragged bursts, each exhale trembling with a need that was so intense it bordered on pain. The moans spilling from his lips carried an edge of desperation, the sound rough and broken, as if he was teetering on the brink of what he could endure.

As Hannibal's body quivered with tension, Will's hand slid up his thigh, fingers pressing into the firm muscle with deliberate roughness. He could feel the coiled energy beneath the surface, every fiber of Hannibal's being straining with the effort to hold back. The heat radiating off him was almost unbearable, the pulse of arousal so strong it seemed to seep from his pores, saturating the air around them with a thick, heady desire.

A dark, satisfied smile curled Will's lips against the damp fabric of Hannibal's briefs. "Shh, Hannibal," he murmured, his voice a soothing, seductive purr that vibrated against the heated skin beneath him. "Just focus on my voice… that's it… just listen to me."

With Will's command, Hannibal drew in a deep, trembling breath, his chest rising and falling as he tried to steady himself. The room was thick with tension, but Will noticed the slight shift in Hannibal's demeanor as he began to respond to the cadence of his voice. Another breath, this one steadier, and the tightness in Hannibal's chest started to ease beneath Will's touch. Will could see the subtle relaxation in Hannibal's posture, the way his body gradually surrendered to the soothing authority in Will's words.

A low whisper, thick with approval, escaped Will's lips. "That's my good boy," he murmured, each word a sultry caress against the delicate fabric separating him from Hannibal's throbbing cock.

The slow, torturous exploration continued as Will's mouth dragged deliberately over the stiff outline of Hannibal's cock, still confined by the thin fabric. He could feel the tension thrumming through Hannibal, the way his body trembled with every teasing touch. The fabric was soaked with precome, the evidence of Hannibal's arousal so potent it made Will's own cock pulse with anticipation.

With deliberate slowness, Will pulled back, lifting his head to savor the sight of Hannibal laid out before him. His lips glistened with saliva, the taste of Hannibal's arousal still lingering on his tongue, and the image of Hannibal—so desperate, so achingly close to breaking—sent a fresh wave of heat surging through Will's veins. The urge to take Hannibal completely, to claim him in every possible way, was almost overwhelming. Yet, he held himself back, savoring the control he wielded, the power to draw this moment out for as long as he wished.

Leaning in close, Will let his breath ghost over Hannibal's flushed skin, letting the tension hang in the air for just a heartbeat longer. His voice dropped to a low, husky whisper laced with simmering intent. "You're right there, aren't you, Hannibal? So close…" He let his hand drift up, pressing firmly against Hannibal's chest, feeling the wild thrum of his heartbeat beneath his palm. "But I want more from you."

The command was laced with both tenderness and authority, a perfect balance of control and care that only Will could deliver. “You can come whenever you want,” Will continued, his tone a sultry murmur that wrapped around them like a ravenous caress. “But know this…” His voice dropped even lower, a dangerous edge creeping in as his thumb brushed over Hannibal’s nipple, teasing the sensitive flesh. “I expect you to come around my cock when I fuck you.”

The moment the words left Will’s lips, Hannibal’s entire body reacted as if struck by a lightning bolt. A violent tremor ran through him, his muscles tensing and locking as the overwhelming surge of arousal crashed over him with the force of a tidal wave. The effect was immediate, and Will could see it in the way Hannibal’s composure shattered, the tightly held control unraveling right before his eyes.

Without Will even needing to touch him, Hannibal’s orgasm tore through him with a force that was almost brutal in its intensity. His body convulsed, hips jerking upward with a desperate, uncontrolled force as the climax seized him. The first gush of cum erupted, hot and thick, soaking through the silk and spreading rapidly across Hannibal’s skin. His release came in relentless waves, each one more powerful than the last, the fabric darkening as it struggled to contain the sheer volume of his orgasm.

Hannibal’s hands clamped onto the edge of the desk, knuckles turning white as his fingers dug into the wood, the strain of holding on palpable in every trembling muscle. His body arched off the desk, muscles tensing and releasing as he rode out the intense surges of his climax, each pulse sending another rush of heat through him. His voice, normally so controlled and measured, broke free in a series of choked moans and ragged gasps, the sounds naked and unguarded, each one more desperate than the last.

Will’s gaze locked onto every movement, every twitch and spasm that racked Hannibal’s body. The pressure of the briefs heightened the intensity of his orgasm, trapping the heat and wetness against his skin, making him writhe and twist on the desk, his hips bucking uncontrollably as the relentless waves crashed over him. The sight of Hannibal trembling and gasping, reduced to this state by nothing more than his words, made Will’s cock throb with renewed urgency. The need to claim Hannibal, to sink into the heat of him, clawed at Will with brutal intensity, pushing him to the brink of his own restraint.

“You’re so fucking beautiful like this, Hannibal,” Will growled, his voice full of a mix of desire and praise. “So desperate, so needy… Look at you, all fucked out and trembling. You’re amazing, you know that? So fucking turned on that you came in your pants just from my words.” His voice was thick with satisfaction, the words a combination of praise and degradation that made Hannibal shiver beneath him.

As Will spoke, his hands were already in motion, tearing at his own shirt, ripping it off in one fluid motion and tossing it aside without a second thought. His chest heaved with exertion, each breath making his muscles flex and strain as he fought to contain the feral need that surged through him. The cool air hitting his bare skin was a brief shock, quickly replaced by the heat radiating off his body, the sheer intensity of his arousal making every inch of him thrum with energy.

“It’s pathetic, really,” he added, his tone laced with the faintest edge of humiliation. But the sting of his words was softened by the way he leaned down to press a quick kiss to Hannibal’s still twitching abdomen, a gesture that carried both affection and ownership.

All the while, Hannibal lay beneath him, his body still shuddering, his chest rising and falling rapidly as he tried to catch his breath. His legs twitched, muscles spasming as if trying to move, to wrap around Will, but the strength simply wasn’t there. The tremors in his limbs wouldn’t subside, his muscles locked in a tension that refused to release, every nerve ending still screaming for more, even as his body lay utterly spent beneath Will’s gaze.

Will didn’t waste a second. The moment his mind registered the need, his hands were already moving, driven by the singular focus that had overtaken him. The drawer of Hannibal’s desk groaned in protest as he yanked it open, the sound sharp and intrusive in the charged atmosphere. Will’s fingers rifled through papers and pens, the mundane objects feeling almost foreign under his touch, until they finally closed around what he was searching for—the cool, smooth surface of a bottle of lube, tucked away yet easily within reach.

A satisfied smirk curled his lips as he pulled it free, the bottle glinting in the dim light as if to acknowledge what was to come. His gaze flicked down to Hannibal, sprawled out and utterly wrecked, his body still quivering with the aftershocks of his release. The sight sent a fresh surge of heat pooling in Will’s gut, a fire that demanded to be quenched. With a quick flick of his thumb, he uncapped the bottle, the sharp click echoing in the thick, oppressive silence that had settled between them.

Anticipation hung in the air, a live wire thrumming with electric tension, tightening like a vice with each passing second. Will poured a generous amount of the slick liquid over his fingers, the coolness a fleeting sensation that quickly warmed against his skin. His breath caught in his chest, his need to be inside Hannibal—fully, completely—overriding every other thought, driving him forward with an urgency that bordered on desperation.

There was no time for pretense, no room for gentleness. Will’s hand moved with deliberate speed, spreading the lube around Hannibal’s entrance, the slickness easing the way as his fingers traced the sensitive ring of muscle. He allowed himself a brief moment to savor the way Hannibal’s body responded, the tight ring clenching slightly before yielding to his touch.

His fingers circled Hannibal’s hole with deliberate precision, the slickness reducing friction but doing nothing to diminish the incredible tightness that met him. The sensation of Hannibal’s body gripping him, still so taut despite his earlier release, sent a pulse of arousal straight to Will’s cock, making it throb with a near-painful urgency. The temptation to draw this out, to tease and prolong Hannibal’s desperation, flickered through his mind—but the sheer need coursing through Will’s veins made the decision for him. Restraint was an impossible luxury.

Without warning, Will plunged two fingers into Hannibal’s entrance, his breath catching at the overwhelming heat that enveloped him. The slick, tight channel gripped his fingers with an intensity that made his cock twitch in response, the sensation almost too much to bear. Hannibal’s body reacted instantly, his back arching off the desk, a low, choked moan escaping his lips as Will’s fingers stretched him wide. Even after everything, Hannibal’s

muscles flexed and tightened around him, the aftershocks of his recent orgasm still rippling through his body, adding to the delicious pressure that gripped Will like a vice.

Hannibal's body seemed to plead for more, every tight clench and pulse silently begging Will to take him apart, to push him to the brink and pull him back again. The thought alone sent Will's control spiraling, his focus narrowing to the singular task of filling Hannibal completely, of claiming every inch of him until there was nothing left but the raw, unfiltered connection between them.

Will's other hand clamped down on Hannibal's thigh, the grip firm, almost punishing, as if to remind him who was in control. The heat of Hannibal's skin seared into Will's palm, every subtle tremor beneath the surface feeding the possessive hunger gnawing at his core. His fingers twisted and stretched inside Hannibal, each movement precise, calculated, and devoid of tenderness. This wasn't about coaxing pleasure—it was about preparing him, getting him ready to be taken, to be filled completely with Will's cock.

Breath quickening, Will moved with an efficiency that bordered on brutal. Every thrust of his fingers was deliberate, driving deeper, pushing Hannibal closer to the edge but never letting him fall over. The slick, tight heat clenching around his fingers was intoxicating, a constant reminder of what awaited him. Will's own arousal throbbed with fierce urgency, the instinctual urge to claim, to possess, growing stronger with each passing second.

The overwhelming need to be inside Hannibal spurred Will into swift action. He barely gave Hannibal time to adjust as he abruptly withdrew his fingers, the sudden emptiness drawing a soft, desperate whimper from Hannibal's lips. That sound only fueled the fire inside Will, driving his urgency to new heights. With almost frantic movements, he shoved his pants and boxers down to his thighs, the cool air hitting his skin.

His cock, already hard and aching, sprang free, the head slick with precome, glistening in the dim light. There was no hesitation as he slicked himself up with the remaining lube on his fingers, the cool liquid quickly warming against his fevered flesh. The need to take, to claim, to possess was all-consuming, and Will was determined to give in to it fully.

Will's hands moved with purpose as he gripped Hannibal's thighs, lifting them with a firm, possessive hold. He could feel the slight tremble in Hannibal's muscles, the subtle quiver that betrayed his anticipation. Will maneuvered Hannibal's legs over his shoulders, spreading him wide, exposing him completely. As he gripped Hannibal's thighs and spread him wide, the power of taking what was his sent a shudder through Will.

There was a brief pause, the air between them thick with tension, as Will lined himself up at Hannibal's entrance. The blunt head of his cock pressed against the slick ring of muscle, the pressure building between them almost unbearable. Hannibal, driven by the same desperate need that pulsed through Will's veins, instinctively lifted his legs higher, the movement shaky, eager. His legs settled over Will's shoulders, the position spreading him wide open, ready to be taken completely.

Will leaned in closer, his breath ghosting over Hannibal's flushed skin as the tip of his cock barely brushed against his entrance, teasing, testing. His voice was low, rough with arousal,

as he spoke, the words tumbling out in a breathless rush. “That’s it… spread out for me, so fucking beautiful… ready to take everything I give you.”

But Will didn’t push inside just yet; the moment was too perfect to rush. Instead, he rubbed the tip along the slick hole, the pressure light but maddening, driving them both wild with need. The sensation of Hannibal’s body clenching, straining for more, sent a jolt of pleasure up Will’s spine. The tension in Hannibal’s muscles, the way his body practically begged for more, was almost too much to bear. Will could feel the desperation building in both of them, the overwhelming urge to plunge deep inside and lose himself in the heat and tightness that awaited. But he held back, savoring the build-up, the sweet torment of holding all the power in his hands.

Just as Will was on the verge of giving in to the overwhelming need to bury himself inside Hannibal, a flicker of movement caught his eye. He stilled, his breath hitching as his gaze darted to the door leading into the waiting room. It was slightly ajar, and through the narrow crack, he caught sight of Alana. Her eyes were wide, her expression a mix of shock and something far more complex—fascination, maybe, or a darker, more twisted curiosity. She stood frozen, her gaze locked on them, utterly transfixed.

A jolt of something sharp and electric surged through Will. The rush of surprise was laced with a darker thrill, an arousal that clawed at his insides. The idea of being watched, of someone bearing witness to the raw, filthy act he was about to commit, sent a wave of heat crashing through him. The tension in the room, already thick and suffocating, seemed to coil tighter, the air charged with an intensity that made every nerve in Will’s body hum with excitement.

Alana’s gaze bore down on them, and rather than feeling exposed, Will found himself reveling in it. The weight of her attention didn’t diminish his arousal; it heightened it, made his blood sing with the knowledge that she was watching, that she was right there, drinking in every moment of this brutal, unrestrained intimacy. His fingers tightened their grip on Hannibal’s thighs, the flesh pliant under his touch, grounding him in the moment even as his mind spun with the possibilities.

Without tearing his focus from Hannibal, Will allowed the awareness of Alana’s presence to seep into him, to enhance the ruthless pleasure that pulsed through his veins. His hand moved with deliberate slowness, trailing up Hannibal’s leg, his fingertips grazing over the taut muscles. The heat of Hannibal’s skin seared against his palm, the touch a deliberate tease, unhurried, as if he intended to savor every second, to stretch the intensity of the moment until it was unbearable. Hannibal’s calf twitched in response, a small, involuntary movement that sent a low, throaty sound rumbling from deep within his chest.

Will leaned in, his breath warm as it ghosted over Hannibal’s flushed skin. The scent of their mingled arousal hung heavy in the air, thick enough to taste. He paused, letting the tension coil even tighter, giving Alana a clear view of everything—the way Hannibal’s body shuddered beneath his touch, the way Will’s own muscles flexed with the restraint he barely managed to hold onto. His lips brushed against the smooth skin of Hannibal’s calf, hot and slick with sweat, the sensation sending a shiver of pure, unfiltered desire down his spine.

Each kiss was a slow, deliberate claim, his lips lingering against the curve of Hannibal's leg, drinking in the taste and texture. The act felt almost reverent, yet possessiveness simmered beneath it, a current that tinged each movement. The soft, pliant flesh yielded easily to his touch, and he felt the tremor that coursed through Hannibal, the way his body instinctively opened up, offering itself with a trust that was absolute.

Will didn't need to glance at Alana to sense the intensity of her gaze, to know that she was witnessing every nuance of the connection between him and Hannibal—the tenderness in his touch, the dominance in his actions, the way he commanded Hannibal's submission with nothing more than a kiss. The weight of the moment was almost tangible, a heavy, electric charge that crackled in the air, and Will reveled in it, luxuriated in the power that thrummed through his veins. He wanted Alana to see this, to understand the depth of what lay between him and Hannibal—an intricate weave of desire, need, and something far more profound.

Hannibal released a sharp exhale that betrayed his need, his body instinctively arching toward Will as if drawn by an invisible thread, seeking more of his touch, more of the connection that pulsed like a living thing between them. The soft, needy sound that escaped Hannibal's lips—a faint, breathless whimper, barely more than a whisper in the charged silence—sent a thrill racing down Will's spine, anchoring him fully in the moment.

Will's voice dropped to a low, seductive whisper, the words hanging in the air, thick with intent, their weight drawing Hannibal's attention, pulling him back from the edge. "What do you need right now, Hannibal?" Will's tone was controlled, yet laced with a tenderness that sliced through the tension, demanding the submission he craved—submission Hannibal needed to voice.

Hannibal's response was immediate, his muscles trembling beneath Will's hands, his voice stripped of the careful control he usually wielded. "Please, Will… I need your cock. Take me. Please." The words spilled from his lips, thick with need, each syllable echoing in the charged silence.

Will's lips curved into a slow, satisfied smile as he heard the desperation in Hannibal's voice. There was something deeply intoxicating about the way Hannibal's earlier resistance had crumbled, leaving him in this state—utterly exposed, pleading for Will's touch. The sound of those words, the way they dripped with longing and submission, sent a jolt of pure, unbridled pleasure through Will. He could feel the heat of it in his veins, a fire that roared with an intensity that threatened to consume them both.

But it wasn't just Hannibal's words that fueled Will's arousal—it was the knowledge that Alana was there to witness it all. The idea of her seeing Hannibal in this state, stripped of his usual control, begging so openly, added a potent layer to Will's satisfaction. It was as if every word that spilled from Hannibal's lips was as much for Alana as it was for Will, a demonstration of just how deeply Hannibal had surrendered, not just to Will's touch but to his very presence.

"Good," Will growled, voice thick with approval. His hand tightened on Hannibal's thigh, fingers digging in with a bruising force that promised no mercy, only relentless possession. "You asked so nicely, Hannibal. I'm going to give you exactly what you need." The vow

came out like a breath, a low, savage murmur that lingered in the air, heavy with the tension of what was about to unfold.

Hannibal's movements were wanton, almost instinctual, as his legs tightened around Will, drawing him closer, as if trying to merge their bodies together. The strength in Hannibal's thighs, the way they wrapped around Will with desperate force, only heightened Will's desire. His thoughts flickered briefly to how incredibly powerful Hannibal's thighs felt beneath his hands, the taut muscle flexing under his grip—a reminder of the controlled strength that Hannibal wielded with such precision, now entirely at Will's mercy.

Will could feel the pulse of Hannibal's desire in the way his body moved, how it coursed through every muscle, every shuddering breath. Hannibal's entire being seemed to focus on one thing—on Will, on the connection between them, on the overwhelming need that had taken hold of them both.

His free hand moved with purpose, sliding down to position himself at Hannibal's entrance. His cock, hard and aching, was slick with the remnants of lube from earlier, and the coolness of it against his heated skin only served to heighten the anticipation. The head of his cock brushed against Hannibal's entrance, the sensation sending a shiver of undeniable need through Will's body. His heart pounded in his chest, the tension between them almost unbearable as he prepared to claim what was his.

The other hand slid to Hannibal's hips, fingers digging into the firm flesh as Will anchored himself. For a brief moment, Will allowed himself to take in the sight before him—Hannibal's flushed face, his lips parted in a silent plea, the rise and fall of his chest as he struggled to catch his breath. The vulnerability in Hannibal's expression, juxtaposed with the strength of his body beneath Will's hands, sent a wave of desire crashing through him. Leaning in, Will's voice dropped to a whisper. "You're going to feel every inch of how much you belong to me."

With a deliberate, controlled motion, Will began to press forward, the tight heat of Hannibal's body welcoming him in with a resistance that was both maddening and utterly intoxicating. The stretch, the way Hannibal's body clung to him, squeezing with a pressure that bordered on too much, was everything Will had craved. Each inch that he pushed inside brought with it a wave of pleasure, a slow, agonizing build that made his breath hitch, his control hanging by a thread.

As Will pressed deeper, Hannibal's body arched in response, his spine curving off the desk, a long, obscene groan tearing from his throat. The sound was drenched in pleasure and relief, the kind that vibrated through the room, adding to the charged atmosphere. Hannibal's lips parted, a silent gasp escaping him before it was swallowed by a low, shuddering moan as Will finally seated himself fully inside him, filling him completely.

"Fuck… Will… so deep… so good…" Hannibal's voice was raw, broken, barely able to form the words through the haze of overwhelming sensation. His hands clawed at Will's back, fingers digging into the hard muscle as if trying to pull him even closer, desperate to feel every inch of Will inside him. The nails raked down Will's back, leaving red trails in their wake, the sting of pain mingling with the pleasure, heightening the intensity of the moment.

Will couldn't resist the pull any longer. He leaned down, closing the distance between them, and captured Hannibal's lips in a filthy, desperate kiss. Their mouths collided with fierce intensity, tongues tangling in a frantic dance as they devoured each other. The kiss was consuming, all teeth and tongue, an exchange of power and need. Will could taste the desperation on Hannibal's lips, the salt of sweat mingling with the faint taste of copper from where Hannibal had bitten his own lip earlier. The scent of Hannibal's aftershave lingered in the air between them, a sharp contrast to the musky scent of their combined arousal, intoxicating Will even further.

Will's thrusts started slow and deep, each movement deliberate, calculated to draw out Hannibal's pleasure with a torturous precision. The rhythm was measured, each deep stroke designed to drag against the most sensitive parts of Hannibal's body, pulling soft moans and gasps from his lips with every thrust. The pace was maddening, the pressure of Will's cock inside him a constant, overwhelming presence that kept Hannibal teetering on the edge of ecstasy.

Hannibal's moans, muffled against Will's mouth, vibrated through both of them, a shared pulse of need that drove them further into each other. Hannibal's body arched up into Will's, his hips grinding up, seeking more, craving the friction, the connection, the overwhelming sensation of being filled and taken completely. His fingers continued to claw at Will's back, nails biting into skin, leaving marks that would linger long after the heat of the moment had passed.

As Will moved, his mouth remained locked on Hannibal's, their kiss filthy and desperate, a tangle of tongues and mingling breaths. Will's free hand roamed over Hannibal's body, fingers trailing over slick skin, caressing and squeezing with a possessive hunger, ensuring that Hannibal felt every ounce of his attention and care. The heat of Hannibal's skin beneath his touch, the way his muscles tensed and then melted under Will's grip, was intoxicating, a visceral reminder of the power he wielded over the man beneath him. The sensation of Hannibal's body yielding to him so completely sent a surge of satisfaction through Will, each touch claiming more of the man he had so thoroughly unraveled.

"You feel so good around me, Hannibal," Will whispered between kisses, his voice husky, each word punctuated by a deep thrust. "So perfect. *Mine* ." The word was a growl, a primal claim, as Will buried himself deeper inside Hannibal, relishing the tight, scorching heat that gripped him like a vice, the way every inch of him was enveloped in Hannibal's desperate need.

Hannibal's response was breathless, a moan that was half-plea, half-surrender, his hands gripping the edges of the desk above his head as if to anchor himself in the midst of the overwhelming sensation. "Will… don't stop…" His voice was a hoarse whisper, choked with need, the words tumbling out between gasps as his body writhed beneath Will, seeking more, always more.

He could feel the need radiating off Hannibal in waves, the way his body responded to every thrust, every inch of Will's cock sliding inside him. The heat between them was almost unbearable, the slick friction of their bodies moving together a constant reminder of the intensity burning between them, every thrust pushing Hannibal closer to the precipice.

Will allowed himself to be spurred on by that desperation, his thrusts gradually increasing in pace, each one more forceful, more deliberate than the last. The sound of skin against skin filled the room, mingling with the ragged breaths and low moans that escaped from Hannibal's lips. Every movement was precise, aimed at drawing out the most desperate sounds from Hannibal, the clench of his muscles around Will's cock tightening with every thrust. There was a certain satisfaction in the way Hannibal's body tightened around him, a telltale clench of muscle that signaled he was teetering on the edge of release, hanging by a thread. Will could feel it—Hannibal was so close, so desperate to tip over into that abyss of pleasure.

The way Hannibal's body clung to him, gripping him with a heat and pressure that bordered on exquisite torture, nearly drove Will to the brink himself. The sensation was overwhelming, a perfect combination of tightness and warmth that pulled him deeper, urging him to lose himself in the rhythm they'd created. Hannibal's hands gripped the edge of the desk with a white-knuckled intensity, his knuckles paling as if the act of holding on was the only thing keeping him tethered to reality.

Will watched the tension ripple through Hannibal's body, the way his back arched off the desk, his head thrown back, lips parted in a silent cry of ecstasy. He could see it, feel it—Hannibal was right there, just a heartbeat away from release. And it was at that precise moment, when Hannibal's entire body tensed in preparation for release, that Will abruptly stopped.

The sudden stillness was jarring in wake of the frantic pace they had been moving at just moments before. Will remained buried deep inside Hannibal, his cock pulsing with need, but he didn't move, didn't give Hannibal the satisfaction of that final push over the edge. Instead, he held himself perfectly still, letting the tension build to an unbearable crescendo, savoring the way Hannibal's body writhed beneath him, the desperate frustration rolling off him in waves as he realized just how thoroughly Will controlled his pleasure.

Hannibal's breath hitched sharply, the choked sound of disbelief mingling with a whimper that was almost painful to hear. His entire body trembled beneath Will, muscles contracting and relaxing in a frantic attempt to draw Will back into motion, to coax him into giving that last push. But Will remained steadfast, feeling the frantic flutter of Hannibal's pulse beneath his fingertips, the erratic rise and fall of his chest as he battled to regain some semblance of control over his body, to rein in the overwhelming need that had been so cruelly denied.

Will leaned in, his breath ghosting over the shell of Hannibal's ear, the heat of it causing a visible shiver to run through Hannibal's body. "Not yet," Will whispered, his voice a low, dangerous murmur that sent a thrill down Hannibal's spine. The words were a warning, a seductive tease that he wouldn't let Hannibal tumble over the edge until the moment was right.

The moments ticked by, each second stretching out into what felt like an eternity of unbearable tension. Will could feel the heat of Hannibal's body surrounding him, the slick warmth of their connection still pulsing with the aftershocks of their frenzied movement. But he didn't move, didn't relent, letting Hannibal cool off just enough, allowing the urgency of his impending orgasm to ebb slightly before he started again.

When Will finally began to move once more, it was slow, agonizingly so. He pulled out just enough to feel the friction, the delicious drag of his cock against the tight ring of muscle that still clung to him, resisting every inch, before pushing back in with the same measured control. The pace was excruciating, every thrust calculated to rebuild the tension that had been momentarily diffused. Will watched the way Hannibal's body responded, the way his muscles twitched, the subtle arch of his back, the way his breath caught in his throat with each slow, deliberate stroke. The need was still there, simmering just beneath the surface, but Will was in no hurry to let it boil over just yet.

Will's eyes never left Hannibal, drinking in the way his body responded, the subtle shifts in posture, the way his breath caught in his throat with every slow, deliberate stroke. He could feel the tightness of Hannibal's body around him, the way he clenched and unclenched with each movement, his muscles betraying the desperation that was beginning to consume him.

Hannibal's breath was ragged, his voice breaking as he whimpered, "Will… please… I need to come… I can't take it…" It was a raw, broken sound, tinged with a vulnerability that sent a thrill of satisfaction coursing through Will's veins. He could feel the power he held in that moment, the way he could bring Hannibal to the edge with nothing more than a slow, measured thrust.

"Oh, Hannibal," he murmured, voice filled with false sympathy. "I'm not even close to being done with you yet." The words were a deliberate tease, meant to heighten Hannibal's desperation, to remind him of who was in control. The words were a taunt, a cruel reminder that Will was in complete control, and he had every intention of drawing this out, of making Hannibal suffer in the most exquisite way possible.

Hannibal's moans escalated, deep, guttural sounds giving way to high-pitched cries of desperation. Each one grew more frantic, his body trembling beneath Will, every muscle drawn taut with the unbearable need for release. The raw, electric charge between them crackled in the air, a tangible force that thrummed through every nerve. The slickness of sweat and natural lubricant blended as they moved together, their bodies locked in a rhythm of rising tension, building to an unbearable peak. The tight, vice-like grip of Hannibal's body around him, the way his muscles clenched and released with every thrust, sent Will spiraling toward the edge of his own control, the primal need to claim and consume overwhelming every thought.

As Hannibal's cries grew more desperate, his voice cracking with the intensity of his need, his body signaling that he was close—so close—Will suddenly stilled, pulling back just as Hannibal's orgasm teetered on the brink. The abrupt cessation of movement was a cruel denial, the loss of friction leaving Hannibal's body quaking with unmet desire. Hannibal's reaction was immediate, a broken sob ripping from his chest, unrestrained and agonized, as the pleasure was snatched away from him yet again. His head tilted back, muscles straining, while tears of frustration dampened the silk of the tie blindfolding him.

But as Will prepared to move again, a flicker of movement caught his eye—a subtle shift in the dim light, a reminder of the third presence in the room. His gaze shifted, and there, standing just out of the direct line of sight, was Alana. Her chest heaved with shallow breaths, pupils blown wide as she watched them with an intensity that betrayed her own

arousal. The way her fingers trembled ever so slightly near her lips, the flush on her cheeks, told Will everything he needed to know—she was undeniably caught up in the raw, erotic spectacle before her.

Slowly, deliberately, Will's eyes locked with Alana's, and the intensity in his gaze was anything but casual. The recognition of her presence ignited something darker within him, a surge of possessive pride as he held her stare with a blatant challenge. There was a calculated, deliberate edge to the way he maintained that electric eye contact, a silent demand that she witness everything, that she understand the depth of control he wielded over the man beneath him.

As his gaze remained locked on Alana's, Will allowed himself to slip into her mind, just for a moment, to fully absorb the chaotic whirlwind of emotions she was experiencing. The intensity of her arousal hit him first, a sharp, electric jolt that mirrored the heat pooling low in her belly. Her body ached with it, a visceral pull that made her breath quicken, her thighs clenching together involuntarily as she tried to contain the sudden surge of need that was threatening to overwhelm her. The air around them seemed to crackle with it, her desire so potent that Will could almost taste it on his tongue, mingling with the salty tang of sweat and sex that already saturated the room.

But beneath that raw, undeniable lust, there was a jagged edge—a spike of hurt and jealousy that cut through the haze of her desire with startling clarity. It twisted in her gut, a bitter pang that seemed to throb in time with the rhythmic thrusts of Will's hips, the sound of skin against skin only amplifying the sharp ache in her chest. Will could feel it as if it were his own, the tightness in her throat, the way her breath stuttered as she fought to reconcile the image before her with everything she thought she knew. The sight of Will and Hannibal intertwined, locked in this intimate dance, was shattering her preconceived notions, leaving her exposed and vulnerable in a way she hadn't anticipated.

The jealousy was unmistakable, a deep-seated reaction that pulsed through her veins with a force that surprised even her. It wasn't just about seeing Will with Hannibal—there was something deeper, something darker, about witnessing Hannibal with Will. The possessiveness that flared within her was unexpected, an instinctual response to seeing two men she cared for sharing something so intense, so intimate, that it left no room for anything or anyone else. She wanted to look away, but she couldn't. The raw, animalistic nature of their connection was both terrifying and exhilarating, a visceral reminder of just how deep the bond between Will and Hannibal truly ran.

Amid that maelstrom of emotion, Will sensed a wave of reluctant understanding from Alana. It was tinged with sadness, a deep, aching sadness that resonated in the pit of her stomach. The realization that what she was witnessing was something she could never truly be a part of, no matter how much she wanted it, brought a lump to her throat, a dull ache that spread through her chest like a slow poison. Yet, within that sadness was a quiet note of acceptance, an understanding that this connection between Will and Hannibal went beyond anything she could ever hope to touch. It was something ancient, something primal, something that existed on a level she could barely comprehend, let alone reach.

Will felt the bittersweet mix of emotions swirling within her, a heady cocktail of desire, envy, sadness, and understanding that made his blood sing with the sheer complexity of it all. He pulled himself out of Alana's mind, his focus snapping back to the present, back to the heat and tension of Hannibal's body beneath him. The raw, unfiltered need in Hannibal's voice brought him crashing back fully into the moment, the desperate edge to each moan a testament to just how close he was, how badly he needed the release that Will was so expertly denying him.

Hannibal's body trembled uncontrollably, each shuddering breath escaping as a ragged burst that caught in his throat, the sound torn between a desperate whimper and a broken moan. Will could feel the tremors beneath his hands, the way the muscles tensed and released with every pulse of pleasure that built inside Hannibal, threatening to overflow. The sight of him on the brink, barely holding on, pushed Will to maintain the steady unrelenting rhythm that kept Hannibal teetering on the edge.

Will's hands gripped Hannibal's hips with a possessive force, his fingers digging into the firm muscle, feeling the way Hannibal's body quivered under his touch. The heat of Hannibal's body wrapped around his cock, the tightness gripping him like a vice, every thrust met with a tension that sent shivers up Will's spine–the sensation was maddening. Hannibal's body clung to him, each inch of movement a delicious torment of heat and pressure that threatened to unravel Will's control. His thrusts grew deeper, more forceful, a possessive claiming of the man beneath him.

"You're mine, Hannibal," Will's voice was low, dripping with dominance, each word heavy with intent. "Every part of you." His tone was a blend of possessiveness and care, a promise that reverberated through the charged air between them. "And I will always give you what you need."

"Yes, Will… I'm yours… only yours…" The words were more breath than sound, spilling out in a rush as if they were torn from the deepest part of him, a declaration of surrender. His hands clutched at Will's back, nails digging in as if trying to ground himself in the reality of Will's presence, in the overwhelming sensation of being taken so completely.

"You trust me, don't you, Hannibal?" Will's voice took on a sly undertone, each word a calculated seduction, a taunt wrapped in reassurance. "Trust me to take care of you, to give you what you need?"

Hannibal whimpered, the sound filled with longing and vulnerability. "Yes, Will… I trust you… always…" The admission was raw, a further unspooling of the tightly wound control that Hannibal usually held so fiercely. His body trembled, muscles taut and quivering, every nerve on fire as he surrendered completely, the trust between them a living, breathing thing in the air.

Will flicked his eyes back to Alana, his expression one of dominance and satisfaction. *You hear that?* The slight curve of his lips, the untamed gleam in his eyes, spoke volumes. He was unsurprised to find her still peeking through the door, her gaze locked on them with a mixture of shock and something darker—fascination, maybe, or perhaps a simmering jealousy. The thrill of her witnessing this act added another layer to his arousal, fueling the intensity of his movements.

His thrusts became more intense, more urgent, the controlled rhythm shifting into something more base, more desperate. He was driving both of them toward the brink, the tension building with each powerful stroke, every movement bringing them closer to the edge. His hands roamed over Hannibal's trembling body, feeling the taut muscles beneath his fingers, the way Hannibal's skin radiated heat, slick with sweat and arousal.

"Are you ready, baby?" Will's voice was a low growl, thick with arousal, the words vibrating through the air and settling deep in Hannibal's core. There was no need for a response—Hannibal's body spoke for him, arching up into Will's thrusts, desperate for more, needing to be filled, to be claimed.

Will's thrusts became faster, harder, each one a powerful surge of pleasure that tore through Hannibal's body. He angled his hips to hit that perfect spot inside Hannibal with every movement, eliciting sharp cries of pleasure that echoed off the walls, each one more frantic than the last. The sounds Hannibal made were intoxicating, a melody of raw need that spurred Will on, driving him to push deeper, harder, to claim Hannibal completely.

Their mouths met in a kiss that was anything but gentle, teeth clashing and tongues tangling in a desperate bid for dominance. The taste of Hannibal's desperation, mingled with the salt of sweat and the faint metallic tang of blood where their teeth had caught skin, was heady, intoxicating, fueling the fire inside Will. The kiss was raw, intense, a reflection of the overwhelming connection between them, their breath mingling as they devoured each other. It was a battle for control, each of them pushing, pulling, the intensity of their desire burning away any semblance of restraint.

Hannibal's entire body was taut with anticipation, his skin flushed a deep red and slick with sweat, each movement drawing him closer to the edge. Will could feel it, the way Hannibal's muscles tightened around him, the way his breath hitched with every thrust, the desperate clench of his fingers on the desk as he writhed under Will's relentless assault.

Will's hand slid down between their bodies, finding Hannibal's throbbing erection and wrapping around it with a firm, demanding grip. He stroked in time with his thrusts, adding another layer of sensation, pushing Hannibal closer and closer to the edge of oblivion. The slickness of precome made each stroke smooth, effortless, the heat and friction an exquisite torment that drove Hannibal wild. His moans turned into cries of pleasure, each one louder, more desperate, echoing through the room.

Will's breath came out hot and ragged against Hannibal's neck, his own need building to an almost unbearable level. Every inhale was filled with the scent of sex and sweat, the heady musk of their combined arousal filling the air, thickening the atmosphere around them. He was completely attuned to Hannibal's responses, adjusting his pace and angle to maximize their pleasure, to drive them both to the point of no return. Will could feel the tension coiling tighter and tighter within Hannibal, each thrust met with a clench that signaled how close he was to breaking. Will's strokes on Hannibal's cock became more urgent, his grip firm, demanding, pushing Hannibal toward that final release. He wanted to see it, to feel it—the moment Hannibal shattered, undone by his touch, his control, his dominance.

This is it, Will thought, his breath catching in his throat as he watched Hannibal unravel beneath him. *This is what he needs, what we both need.* The tight heat of Hannibal's body

squeezing him, the desperate cries that spilled from his lips, and the sight of his complete surrender—it was almost too much for Will to bear. The intensity of it all, the overwhelming connection between them, drove him to the brink, his control hanging by a thread. The room was thick with the scent of sweat, sex, and the raw, electric energy that pulsed between them. The intensity of it all, the overwhelming connection between them, drove him to the brink, his control hanging by a thread. The mantra— *together, always together* —pounded in his mind, the words echoing the deep unity they shared, a bond that went beyond the physical, reaching into the very core of who they were, merging their souls as they reached the peak of their pleasure.

The pressure was building rapidly, burning in Will's lower abdomen, every thrust bringing him closer to that final release. He could feel the way his own heartbeat synced with the rhythm of their bodies, the relentless drive of his hips as he pushed deeper, harder, into the slick, burning heat that enveloped him. The friction, the way Hannibal's body arched up to meet him with every thrust, the way his cock twitched and pulsed in Will's hand, leaking slick fluid that coated Will's fingers—it was all-consuming, a wildfire of need and desire that grew hotter with every passing second, a blaze that threatened to consume them both.

"Come for me, darlin'," Will's voice was thick with arousal, the words a command that left no room for hesitation. His tone was rough, desperate, the Southern drawl more pronounced, a reflection of the intensity that coursed through him. "Please." It was unbidden, slipping from his lips as he felt the tension within him reach its breaking point, the word carrying with it the weight of his own impending release, a desperate call for them to fall over the edge together.

Hannibal's body tensed beneath Will, every muscle locking up as his climax hit him with the force of a tidal wave. His back arched off the desk, his head thrown back, a guttural moan tearing from his throat as his release surged through him. The sound was raw, desperate, a cry that echoed through the room, filling the air with the intensity of his pleasure. His cock pulsed violently in Will's hand, the heat of his release spilling over Will's fingers, slick and hot, adding to the symphony of sensations that overwhelmed them both.

The tight heat of Hannibal's body, the way his muscles clenched and spasmed around Will's cock, was almost too much to bear. Every inch of him seemed to grip Will with a desperate need, refusing to let go, pulling him deeper into the abyss of ecstasy. The sight of Hannibal in the throes of his climax, his face flushed, mouth open in a silent scream, was a vision that sent Will hurtling toward his own release. His senses were overwhelmed, each pulse of Hannibal's release a new wave of sensation that pushed him closer and closer until he could no longer hold back, the last shreds of his control snapping as he surrendered completely to the ecstasy that had overtaken them both.

Will's hips jerked involuntarily, the controlled rhythm he had maintained shattering as his own climax surged through him with brutal intensity. The tight, slick heat of Hannibal's body gripping him, pulsing with the lingering aftershocks of his own orgasm, was the final trigger. Will's breath stalled, his vision narrowing as the overwhelming sensation took hold, drowning out everything else. His thrusts became erratic, desperate, each movement driven by a primal need to lose himself completely in the sensation, to let the pleasure consume him whole.

A strangled groan tore from Will's throat, a sound that was half-pleasure, half-agony, as the first wave of his release hit him. His head fell forward, his forehead pressing against Hannibal's shoulder, the intimacy of the contact grounding him even as his body was pushed to the brink. He buried himself to the hilt, the sensation of Hannibal's body wrapping tightly around him, clenching with every aftershock, driving him deeper into the storm.

The orgasm was all-consuming, a tidal wave of pleasure that crashed over him with relentless force. It felt as if every nerve in his body had been set alight, the sensation so intense it bordered on painful, leaving him gasping for breath. Will's fingers dug into Hannibal's hips, the grip almost bruising as he held on, riding out the powerful waves that wracked his body.

Each thrust became a final, desperate claim, a deep, animalistic need to assert his dominance, to mark Hannibal as his own in every way possible. The wet, obscene sound of their bodies meeting filled the room, the evidence of Will's release spilling into Hannibal, mixing with the slickness of their combined pleasure. The sensation was overwhelming, a fusion of heat and pressure that left Will trembling, his body locked in the throes of climax, the intensity of it sending shudders down his spine as he finally, completely, let go.

Their bodies remained locked together, shuddering with the aftershocks, as the intensity of their climaxes slowly began to ebb. Will's breaths came out in ragged pants, his forehead pressed against Hannibal's shoulder, the two of them still connected in the most intimate way possible. The world seemed to narrow down to just this—just them—two bodies, two souls, bound together in a moment of pure, unadulterated bliss.

Will leaned down, his breath warm against Hannibal's skin as he began to press gentle kisses along the curve of Hannibal's neck. Each touch was unhurried, deliberate, as though Will was savoring the lingering connection between them. His lips brushed over Hannibal's sweat-slicked skin, the salty taste grounding him in the reality of the moment, the way their bodies were still entwined, still trembling with the remnants of their shared ecstasy. The kisses moved lower, tracing a path along Hannibal's shoulder, the touch tender but possessive, a reminder that this man was his, that this bond was something sacred, something only they could share.

"Mine," Will whispered, the word a soft, reverent declaration of the claim he had made, the connection they shared, and the trust that bound them so completely.

As the word settled between them, Will began to pull back from Hannibal, the motion slow and deliberate, his cock softening as he withdrew. Will's hands moved with a tenderness that contrasted with the intensity of their previous actions, gently lowering Hannibal's legs until they were loosely wrapped around his waist. The slight tremor in Hannibal's muscles didn't go unnoticed by Will, the evidence of their exertions a tangible reminder of the pleasure they had shared.

Utterly spent, Hannibal lay there, his chest heaved with each ragged breath, the air still thick with the scent of their lovemaking. The rise and fall of his torso was rhythmic, though still tinged with the exertion of their passion, a subtle shake accompanying each inhale.

Will's hands continued to roam over Hannibal's body, fingers trailing over the slickness of his skin, still warm and damp with sweat. The gentle touch sent shivers running through

Hannibal's frame, the aftershocks of their intimacy still rippling beneath the surface. Will could feel the rapid beat of Hannibal's heart beneath his palm, a reminder of the intensity they had just shared, each beat echoing the connection that had bound them so tightly in that moment.

Eyes raking over the scene before him, Will took in the sight with a mix of satisfaction and possessive pride. Hannibal lay beneath him, thoroughly debauched, his skin flushed and glistening with sweat, his chest rising and falling with labored breaths. Will's gaze traced the path of bruises that marked Hannibal's torso, dark and blooming where his mouth had been, the evidence of his fervent kisses branding Hannibal's skin.

A thumb brushed over one of the bruises, Will's touch gentle, almost reverent, as he marveled at the way Hannibal's body responded to him, even now, after everything. The thought that he had left his mark on this man, that Hannibal had allowed himself to be claimed so completely, filled Will with a warmth that was almost overwhelming. In this quiet, tender moment, there was nothing else—just the two of them, bound together in a love that was as fierce as it was tender, as consuming as it was comforting.

Softly, almost a whisper, Will broke the silence. "You were so good for me, Hannibal," he murmured, his words laced with admiration and affection. His hand continued to move over Hannibal's skin, tracing the outlines of the marks he had left, each touch a reminder of the connection they had forged. "You're so beautiful like this… so perfect." There was a note of reverence in his tone, as if he were speaking to something sacred, something precious. A small, satisfied smile curved Hannibal's lips, his eyes still covered by the tie that bound them.

His gaze moved lower, lingering on the deep indents in Hannibal's hips, the impressions left by Will's fingers as he had held him with an almost bruising force. The sight of those marks, the way they stood out starkly against Hannibal's pale skin, sent a fresh wave of satisfaction coursing through Will. They were physical reminders of the power he wielded, of the way Hannibal had given himself over so completely, trusting Will to take him apart and put him back together again.

Will's hand moved to those indentations, his fingers tracing the marks with a careful, tender touch, as if he were committing them to memory. The skin there was still warm, the slight roughness of the impressions a testament to the intensity of their connection. Hannibal's breath shook slightly at the contact, his body still sensitive, still humming with the echoes of their shared pleasure. Will couldn't resist leaning in, pressing a kiss to one of the marks, his lips brushing over the raised skin with a gentleness that belied the possessiveness that still thrummed through him.

Gradually, Hannibal's body began to relax under Will's touch, the tension slowly unwinding from his muscles as his breaths grew steadier, more even. Yet, the aftershocks of his orgasm still rippled through him, each subtle movement, each brush of Will's fingers, sending a new wave of pleasure and contentment coursing through his veins. Will could feel it in the way Hannibal's body responded, the slight tremors that ran through him, the way his chest rose and fell in a steady rhythm, as if he were riding the lingering high of their shared ecstasy.

At one point, Hannibal moved as if to remove the blindfold, his arms lifting ever so slightly from the desk. But the effort proved too much, his muscles still too spent, and they dropped

back down, his hands coming to rest limply beside him. The sight of Hannibal, so thoroughly exhausted, yet still trying to reclaim some semblance of control, brought a soft chuckle to Will's lips. It was a sound filled with warmth, affection, and just a hint of pride.

"Must've really fucked you good, huh?" Will teased gently, his voice low and affectionate, the words tinged with a mixture of tenderness and satisfaction. Hannibal let out a soft, breathless hum, the sound barely more than a whisper, but filled with unmistakable affirmation. His chest rose and fell with the remnants of his heavy breathing, the noise carrying a weight that resonated with Will, stirring a deeper sense of connection.

Will leaned closer, his lips brushing against Hannibal's ear as he continued, "Here, let me help you, baby." The warmth of his breath tickled Hannibal's ear, drawing out a subtle shiver from the man beneath him, a sign of how deeply attuned Hannibal's body still was to every one of Will's touches and words.

With gentle hands, Will reached up to untie the blindfold around Hannibal's eyes, his fingers moving with the same care and precision that had guided every touch throughout their time together. The knot, tied securely yet thoughtfully, gave way under Will's deft fingers, the fabric slipping free with a soft, almost inaudible whisper as it slid through his grip. Will's touch was tender, almost reverent, as he worked to free Hannibal from the darkness, his movements slow and deliberate, ensuring that no discomfort marred this quiet, intimate moment.

As the blindfold came away, Will noticed the faint crease in Hannibal's brow, the lingering tension that hadn't yet fully dissipated. Leaning in, he pressed a series of soft kisses to Hannibal's temple, his lips barely grazing the skin as he whispered, "It's over now… you did so well. You're safe, and I'm here." His fingers, gentle and sure, began to massage Hannibal's temples, easing the lingering tension with each careful stroke.

There was something deeply satisfying about this—about being the one Hannibal trusted enough to surrender to so completely, to place himself so willingly in Will's hands. The vulnerability in that act, the silent trust that spoke volumes, filled Will with a warmth that spread through his chest, a fierce protectiveness mingling with the tender affection he felt for the man before him.

Hannibal's eyes remained shut, and Will paused, taking in the sight of Hannibal's face, peaceful yet vulnerable in the dim light. Gently, he reached out, his fingers slipping into the soft strands of Hannibal's hair, brushing them back from his forehead. The sensation of the hair slipping through his fingers sent a warm wave of tenderness through Will. He leaned down, pressing a kiss to Hannibal's temple, the touch both a gesture of gratitude and reassurance. It was an assurance that no matter how intense their passions might burn, Will would always be there to protect and cherish him.

"Let me see you, Hannibal," Will murmured softly, his voice carrying a gentle command wrapped in affection.

Hannibal's eyes fluttered open immediately at Will's words, the connection between them sparking to life as their gazes locked. In that moment, Will felt a surge of emotion so strong it

nearly took his breath away. He saw everything in Hannibal's eyes—trust, love, vulnerability—and it made his heart swell with an overwhelming sense of devotion.

Leaning in, Will brought their lips just a breath apart, the warmth of Hannibal's breath mingling with his own. His words came out as a tender whisper against Hannibal's mouth, each syllable filled with love and sincerity. "I love you, baby," he confessed, the words carrying the weight of all they had shared, all they were.

For a moment, Hannibal seemed to struggle to find his voice, his throat working as he tried to speak. His hand lifted slowly, almost tentatively, until his fingers found Will's cheek, the warmth of his touch grounding them both. His thumb brushed gently over the stubble on Will's jaw, the sensation a grounding point in the whirlwind of emotions swirling between them. When he finally spoke, his voice was raspy, but there was no mistaking the certainty in his tone. "Mylimasis… I love you," Hannibal murmured, the words carrying a depth of feeling that matched Will's own, a testament to the love they had found in each other.

Will leaned in, his lips meeting Hannibal's in a kiss that was soft and slow, every movement deliberate and filled with emotion. This kiss was different from the ones that had come before—this one was gentle, reassuring, and infused with the quiet promise of everything they shared. His lips moved tenderly against Hannibal's, savoring the warmth, the connection, the simple intimacy of the moment.

Will's hands continued to caress Hannibal's body, his touch light and comforting as he brushed over Hannibal's shoulders, down his arms, and then back up to cradle his face. Each movement was an affirmation, a way of grounding them both in the here and now, of reminding Hannibal that he was safe, loved, and cherished.

Hannibal melted into the kiss, his body surrendering completely to Will's tender ministrations. A soft hum of contentment vibrated through him, resonating deep within his chest as he reveled in the warmth and closeness they shared. His hands roamed over Will's back, fingers tracing the contours of his muscles with a featherlight touch, pulling him closer and soothing over the scratches he had left in Will's back.

As their lips parted, Will felt Hannibal's breath mingling with his own, the subtle rhythm of their breathing synchronized in the small space between them. Their foreheads pressed together, the intimacy of the moment lingering like the soft glow of a dying ember, casting a sense of completion, of fulfillment over them both. Hannibal's eyes were half-lidded, a soft, satisfied smile curling at the corners of his lips as he gazed at Will with a tenderness that made Will's heart swell and flutter in his chest.

A low chuckle rumbled from Will's throat, the sound warm and intimate, reverberating in the silence that enveloped them. The warmth of the moment, the sheer depth of their connection, was almost overwhelming in its simplicity. This was everything—this quiet, shared space between them, filled with love, trust, and the undeniable bond that had grown stronger with every touch, every whispered word.

Hannibal's voice, soft yet laced with a playful undertone, broke the comfortable silence, a mischievous glint dancing in his eyes as he spoke. "You know, Will… I might have to manipulate situations to bring out this side of you more frequently. Your possessiveness is…

quite thrilling." His tone, teasing and provocative, sent a shiver of warmth through Will, igniting a fresh wave of affection and desire.

Will's laughter bubbled up, rich and genuine, filling the room with a sound that seemed to chase away the remnants of their earlier intensity, replacing it with something lighter, more tender. He pulled back slightly, just enough to look directly into Hannibal's eyes, his own gaze sparkling with mirth and the lingering echoes of their shared intimacy. The connection between them felt more profound in that moment, their bond deepened by the rawness of what they had just shared.

As his laughter faded into a softer, more tender expression, Will's thumb brushed over Hannibal's lower lip, a gesture so gentle it felt like a whisper against the sensitive skin. The tenderness in the touch conveyed everything he felt—his deep affection, his care, his love. With a low chuckle, Will leaned in again, his lips meeting Hannibal's in a kiss that was soft and lingering, a gentle brush that spoke of the bond they shared, one that was unbreakable and profoundly intimate.

Just as their lips met, a distant sound reached Will's ears—a door closing softly, the noise subtle yet distinct in the quiet room. A small smile curved his lips as he realized that Alana had finally left, retreating from their private world. The knowledge that they were alone again, that their world had returned to just the two of them, brought a sense of peace that settled warmly in Will's chest.

Hannibal's smirk grew wider, his eyes sparkling with playful mischief as he remarked, "I trust our dear Alana found the show to her liking."

Will blinked in surprise, his brow furrowing slightly as he processed Hannibal's words. He hadn't realized Hannibal knew she had been there. The realization that Hannibal had been aware all along sent a ripple of awe through him—how had he missed that?

Hannibal's soft chuckle drew Will's attention back to him. "You seemed surprised, Will. Alana has a distinct perfume that I am very familiar with. It's hard to miss."

A sharp spike of annoyance flared in Will's chest, a hot, tight sensation that momentarily clenched around his heart. His brow furrowed, the muscles tightening as he absorbed the information, the irritation like a quick burn beneath his skin. But as quickly as the annoyance came, it faded, replaced by the understanding that Hannibal was, as always, winding him up on purpose.

"You sure enjoy pushing my buttons, winding me up," Will said, his voice carrying a note of mock warning. He leaned in closer, his tone dropping to something more intimate, more dangerous. "Are you really so ready for another lesson on the consequences of your actions?"

Hannibal's eyebrow arched, his smirk widening as he teased back, "With you, always."

The tension between them dissolved into laughter, the sound light and filled with the comfort of their deep connection. But as the laughter subsided, Will felt a flicker of something more serious tugging at the edges of his thoughts. The heat of the moment had carried them away, the thrill of being watched had intensified everything, but now that the haze was lifting, Will

realized they should probably talk about what had just happened—especially the fact that they hadn't been alone.

He glanced at Hannibal, his expression shifting from playful to thoughtful. Hannibal, ever perceptive, noticed the change immediately, his smirk softening into a look of quiet curiosity. Will's tone remained casual, almost offhand, but there was an undercurrent of genuine concern that Hannibal could easily detect. "You know," Will began, his voice light but steady, "if this exhibitionist streak of ours gets out of hand, we might need to set some boundaries. Just making sure we're on the same page."

Hannibal's response was immediate, his smirk widening, his voice dripping with that familiar confidence that made Will's pulse quicken. "Oh, Will," he purred, his tone smooth as silk, "I trust your judgment implicitly. Besides, the thrill of being watched does seem to bring out the best in both of us." There was a playful glint in Hannibal's eyes, one that spoke of both his amusement and his unwavering trust in Will.

Will couldn't help but grin, leaning in closer, his lips brushing against Hannibal's in a kiss that was more about connection than passion. "Good to know," he murmured against Hannibal's lips, the words carrying a hint of teasing. "Because I might enjoy it more than I should."

Their laughter filled the room, a sound that was rich with relief and affection, a testament to the deep bond they shared. The playful banter between them lightened the atmosphere, making the weight of their earlier intensity feel like a distant memory. It was as if the laughter itself was a balm, soothing any lingering tension, reinforcing the connection that had only grown stronger with time.

With a contented sigh, Will wrapped his arms around Hannibal, pulling him close, their bodies fitting together perfectly. The warmth of Hannibal's body against his own, the steady rhythm of his heartbeat, was comforting in a way that words could never fully capture. It was in this embrace that Will felt truly at home, secure in the knowledge that this was where he belonged.

Hannibal's voice softened, a smile playing on his lips as he spoke. "You never cease to amaze me, Will." There was a sincerity in his words, a depth of feeling that spoke to the profound respect and admiration he held for the man in his arms.

Will's response was a murmur against Hannibal's lips, the words whispered with a tenderness that belied their simple truth. "And you, Hannibal, are everything I've ever needed." The admission hung between them, heavy with meaning, a quiet acknowledgment of the love that had grown between them, a love that was as fierce as it was unbreakable.

Chapter End Notes

what do y'all think? worth the cliffhanger ending of the last chapter???

please please please drop a commenting letting me know your favorite part(s)!!

you can also come yell about this fic with me on tumblr (@graciereadshannigram), i genuinely love hearing from all of y'all <3

p.s. it's been a minute since i've updated the tags, please let me know if you think anything is missing :)

Between Warmth and Fire

Chapter Notes

this ended up much more fluffy and domestic than i originally planned, but i don't *think* anybody will really complain :)

beta'd by my eternal favs, EnmitiesSaddestGlare and Jay_Is_A_Rat, love you both so much <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was going to be an unusually warm Friday for early spring, the kind of day that beckoned people outdoors to soak in the mild sun and the promise of renewal that hung in the air. Will sat on his porch, cradling a steaming cup of coffee in his hands, savoring the warmth that seeped through the ceramic and into his fingers. The world around him was bathed in the soft light of the early morning, the sun having risen not long ago, its rays casting a golden glow over the landscape.

The sunlight filtered through the budding trees, casting dappled shadows across the ground that danced with the gentle sway of the branches. The leaves, still tender and new, whispered in the breeze, adding a delicate rustling to the symphony of the waking world. Will watched as his dogs roamed the yard, their tails wagging as they explored the familiar territory with renewed enthusiasm, noses to the ground as they followed the scent trails left by the nocturnal visitors that had passed through during the night.

For Will, spring had always been a metaphor that eluded him—a season of renewal and growth that he'd never quite experienced in his own life. When he first met Hannibal, it had felt like perpetual early winter, a time of uncertainty and cold, where everything was frozen beneath the surface. The encephalitis had been the first bite of winter's cruelty, numbing his senses, and warping his reality. And then there was the deep, brutal winter that followed—Hannibal framing him for Abigail's murder, the Copycat's gruesome work, and the Chesapeake Ripper's trail of death. It was a time when everything was stripped bare, exposed to the harsh elements, leaving nothing but cold, hard truths in its wake.

Now, as he sat on his porch, the early morning air carried the fresh scent of dew-soaked earth and the faint perfume of budding flowers. The wood beneath him creaked slightly as he shifted, the gentle rustling of leaves filling the silence between his thoughts. Looking back on that time now, it felt almost hazy to Will, like a vivid dream that had slipped just beyond the edges of his memory. The intensity of those days had a surreal quality, a thick fog clouding his mind, preventing him from grasping the full weight of what was happening. Back then, there had been a veil between him and Hannibal, something that kept them at a distance despite the deepening connection between them. Hannibal had been a riddle wrapped in

shadows, always just out of reach, and Will had been left trying to piece together a puzzle where the picture never quite made sense.

But now, things were different. Hannibal had allowed him behind the veil. They saw each other clearly, stripped of the pretenses and games that had once defined their interactions. There was a raw honesty between them, a recognition of their true selves that hadn't existed before. As he inhaled deeply, the crisp air filled his lungs, grounding him in the present, Will thought back to earlier in the week, in Hannibal's office—how he had broken Hannibal down, and how Hannibal had let him, had welcomed it. It had been a moment as intimate as it was intense, where Will had taken Hannibal apart piece by piece, only to put him back together again.

A soft breeze stirred the trees, carrying with it the subtle fragrance of pine and damp wood, mixing with the faint, distant chirping of birds. As he sat on his porch, the early morning sun warming his face, Will felt a different kind of warmth spread through him, one that had nothing to do with the sunlight. It was the warmth of something deeper—an understanding, a connection that had taken root and was beginning to grow. He couldn't help but feel that maybe—just maybe—something was beginning to thaw. His relationship with Hannibal, once buried beneath layers of ice and snow, was starting to bloom from the cold earth. It was fragile, like the first shoots of green poking through the frost, but it was there. It was real. And for the first time in a long time, Will felt the stirrings of something that resembled hope, a tentative belief that there could be life after the long winter he had endured.

Of course, they still had to deal with Jack. Will's thoughts turned wry for a moment— *Just need to get him off our backs, and then we can focus on what really matters.* He took another slow sip of his coffee, feeling the warmth spread through his chest, mingling with the early morning chill. He'd talk with Hannibal about that later, and strategize the best way to handle it. But for now, he was going to enjoy his coffee.

Will let out a contented sigh, his gaze drifting lazily across the yard, taking in the scene before him. The early hour meant the world was still quiet, still holding on to the last moments of tranquility before the day truly began. He liked it this way—the solitude, the stillness. It gave him space to breathe, to think, to simply be.

The dogs' soft snuffles and the rustling of leaves were the only sounds breaking the stillness, a soothing backdrop to his thoughts. He had expected to be working today, fully anticipating a call from Jack, eager to pull his favorite tool out of the shed. *It's still early, I suppose* , Will thought grimly, his mind already picturing the usual chaos Jack's calls brought with them. But the week had been eerily quiet. Maybe even serial killers need a week off, he mused with a touch of dark humor. The case Jack had briefed the team on earlier seemed to be stalled, mired in the kind of red tape and dead ends that even Will couldn't easily unravel. With no other pressing matters, Will found himself with an entire day free—a rarity that left him feeling slightly adrift. What did he even do with himself when there was no crisis to manage, no darkness to wade through?

He downed the last of his coffee, savoring the lingering bitterness before whistling sharply to the dogs. They all immediately perked up and bounded over to him—save for Buster, who was insistently sniffing at something buried in the grass. Will called his name sharply, and

after a moment of hesitation, Buster trotted over, tail wagging as if he'd found something important. Will shook his head with a small smile, then headed inside, the dogs following close behind.

Once in the kitchen, he quickly prepared a piece of toast, eating it as he leaned against the counter, contemplating how to fill the unexpected stretch of free time. His mind naturally wandered to Hannibal, who would be coming over later to make dinner and spend the night in Wolf Trap. Despite only having a half-day of patients, Hannibal had mentioned having *matters to attend to* that would keep him busy for the afternoon. Will's curiosity had been piqued by the vague explanation. What kind of matters did Hannibal need to attend to? It wasn't like Hannibal to be anything less than precise, so the ambiguity left Will wondering.

He wasn't worried—Hannibal was Hannibal, after all, and there were always layers to whatever he did—but the curiosity lingered, a small, persistent itch in the back of his mind. *I'm sure I'll find out,* Will thought as he finished his toast, *whenever Hannibal's ready to tell me* . For now, he had the morning to himself, and he intended to make the most of it.

Will's mind jumped to a project he had been putting off for months. It was something that had lingered at the back of his thoughts, always there but never quite pressing enough to demand his full attention—until now.

Will's bedroom had been left cold and empty in the wake of his encephalitis, a space that had once held comfort and rest now turned into a neglected relic of a time when his mind was unraveling. The decision to move downstairs had been a practical one—staying on the ground floor had felt safer when he was plagued by the disorientation and instability that the illness brought. The stairs had become an insurmountable barrier on some days, and it had been easier to simply avoid them altogether. The bedroom upstairs, once his refuge, had become a reminder of those dark days, and he hadn't felt the motivation to move his bed back upstairs until very recently.

It wasn't just the physical space that had changed; it was what the room had come to represent. When he thought about it now, he realized how much of his life he had allowed to be shaped by fear—fear of what he might become if he gave in to the darkness that had always loomed at the edges of his consciousness. He had confined himself to a single floor, a single room, hoping that staying within those boundaries might somehow keep the darkness at bay. But that was a lie he had told himself, a lie born out of fear and self-preservation.

The truth was, that fear had been unfounded. The darkness wasn't something to be kept at bay—it was something he was meant to embrace, something that had always been an intrinsic part of who he was. Hannibal had seen it from the beginning and had understood what Will couldn't see at the time. Will might have resented Hannibal for knowing him so well, for pushing him toward that darkness when he wasn't ready if they hadn't ended up here together. But as he stood there now, surveying the neglected room, Will knew the fear that had once driven him had only been a shadow, a distortion of the truth.

He had never felt more like himself than he did now. The darkness he had once feared wasn't a monster waiting to consume him; it was the missing piece, the part of himself that had been waiting to be acknowledged, to be integrated. Will wouldn't change a thing. He'd do it all

again—every moment, every struggle, every terrifying step into the unknown—just to reach this point.

And now, the darkness no longer held him back, but instead, it had paved the way for something deeper, something that went beyond mere survival. Will wasn't exactly embarrassed by his current sleeping arrangements. Hannibal had never made him feel anything less than comfortable about it, had never commented on the state of Will's home in a way that felt judgmental. Experiencing domesticity with Hannibal had brought Will a sense of contentment he hadn't realized he craved. The night they had made gumbo together, working side by side in the kitchen with easy familiarity; the quiet mornings when Hannibal would sketch him in the soft, golden light that filtered through the windows, capturing something in Will that he had never been able to see; the way Hannibal had embraced Will's dogs, not just tolerating them, but loving them as part of Will's life—all of it had created a hunger in Will for more. He wanted it all, wanted the life they had begun to build together.

And that included a proper shared bedroom. A space that was theirs, where they could retreat together, where they could find solace and connection in the quiet hours of the night. The idea of creating such a space felt like the final step in shedding the fear that had once kept him isolated, that had made him believe he could never have this kind of life.

The room needed more than just airing out and a bit of cleaning. It felt neglected, the walls dull and lifeless, the air heavy with the scent of disuse. Will decided that a fresh coat of paint would be the first step toward reclaiming the space, making it into something new. He had planned this project long before Jack's relentless demands had derailed his life, and he had chosen a color that felt right—a rich, woodsy green that reminded him of the forests surrounding his home, a color that would ground him in nature even when inside.

Beyond a fresh coat of paint, it would need further updates—a new mattress and bedframe wouldn't go amiss, nor would other decorations. Will's gaze drifted over the sparse furnishings, imagining the changes that could be made. A bed that wasn't just functional but inviting, the kind of bed where two people could tangle themselves up in each other and the warmth of the covers. A room that reflected both him and Hannibal, merging their worlds into something cohesive. But as the thoughts formed, a tightness gripped Will's chest, a creeping insecurity and doubt that clawed its way into his consciousness. People like him and Hannibal didn't get this—didn't get to create a life together, didn't get to have something as simple as a shared bedroom filled with small comforts and personal touches.

But Will, ever the master of repressing unpleasant thoughts, shoved them aside with practiced ease. He pushed the nagging doubts back into the corners of his mind, focusing instead on the excitement that had begun to stir in his chest as he retrieved the supplies from the basement. The cans of paint, rollers, brushes, and drop cloths had been gathering dust, waiting for the day when he'd have both the time and the energy to tackle the task. Today was that day, and for now, that was enough.

He began by clearing out the room, moving the old furniture with a care that belied his eagerness to get started. The bedframe creaked as he shifted it to the hallway, the metal groaning under the pressure, protesting its removal. The dresser scraped lightly against the wooden floor as he pushed it aside, the sound oddly satisfying in the quiet of the house. Each

movement felt like the shedding of an old skin, a necessary purging of the past to make way for something new. The air in the room was stale, heavy with the scent of winter's remnants and the faint musk of old wood, but as Will opened the windows, a fresh breeze swept in, carrying with it the earthy scent of budding leaves and the soft promise of spring. The sunlight streamed through the glass, illuminating the dust motes that danced in the air, giving the room a warmth and brightness that it hadn't seen in months.

The morning passed in a blur of activity. Will worked with a focused energy, scrubbing the walls clean, feeling the rough texture beneath his hands as he prepared the surface for the new paint. There was something satisfying about the physicality of the work, the way the grime lifted away under his touch, as if he were erasing the layers of pain and confusion that had accumulated over the years. He carefully lined the baseboards with tape, the sound of it peeling off the roll echoing in the now-empty space. He spread tarps across the floor, the fabric rustling as it settled into place, and by the time he was ready to start painting, the room felt like a blank canvas, waiting for a new life to be breathed into it.

The first strokes of green against the wall were immensely satisfying, the rich color spreading smoothly, covering the old, faded paint with a fresh, vibrant hue. Will's mind quieted as he worked, the rhythmic motion of the brush calming in its repetition. The color felt right, filling the room with a sense of life and renewal that it had been lacking.

Hours passed unnoticed as Will cut in around the edges and then began to roll the color on, his focus so intense and his mind blissfully blank that he barely registered the passage of time. The rhythmic motion of the roller, the rich green paint spreading smoothly across the walls, was meditative, each stroke grounding him in the moment and pushing aside any lingering worries or doubts. The repetitive, soothing nature of the task lulled his thoughts into a comfortable silence, a rare and welcome respite from the usual chaos that inhabited his mind.

But just as Will began to lose himself entirely in the steady rhythm of painting, a sharp slam from outside shattered the calm. His brain froze for half a heartbeat, panic seizing him—had he lost track of time and worked through until dinner? No, the light filtering through the windows was all wrong, casting the room in the soft, golden hues of late afternoon rather than the dim twilight of evening. A glance at his watch confirmed that it was too early to be Hannibal. Confusion prickled at the edges of his thoughts as he tried to place the sound.

And then, he heard a familiar bark—Applesauce's high-pitched, excited yip echoing through the quiet air. Will's tension eased, replaced by a different kind of confusion. Applesauce's presence could only mean one thing: Alana.

Inside the house, his dogs responded immediately, a chorus of barks and howls rising in a chaotic symphony as they rushed to the door, eager to greet their old friend. The sound of their nails clicking against the wooden floor added to the commotion, a frenzy of excitement that always accompanied Applesauce's visits.

He frowned, disgruntled by the unexpected visit. *Why is Alana here?* Will stood there for a moment, paintbrush still in hand, the scent of fresh paint filling his nostrils as he tried to process this unexpected visit. He wasn't in the mood for interruptions, least of all from Alana, but there was no avoiding it now.

His mind, already inclined to wander, returned to the last time he'd seen her—her wide eyes peeking through Hannibal's office door, catching sight of him buried to the hilt inside Hannibal. The memory surged through him with an almost visceral force, a mix of possessive heat and satisfaction warming his chest. A small, wicked part of him wondered if that was why she was here, if the image of what she had witnessed still lingered in her mind, pulling her back to him, to them.

Oh, this'll be good , he thought with a chuckle, the corners of his mouth curving up as he considered the possibilities. But as the thought settled in, a shadow of doubt crept in alongside it. What if Alana wasn't here just to talk? What if she had already gone to Jack or was about to? The idea sent a cold sliver of anxiety through him, souring the smugness he had felt just moments before. Alana had always been driven by what she believed was right, and if she thought that going to Jack was the best course of action, Will was certain she'd do it without hesitation.

He didn't have long to dwell on it because he heard an insistent knock at his door, the sound pulling him fully back into the present. It was sharp, purposeful—Alana's signature knock, firm and direct, leaving no doubt that she expected an answer. Will sighed, picking up a drop cloth to wipe the paint from his hands and the sweat from his brow, the cool fabric offering a brief relief from the heat that had built up in the room.

The house was silent except for the rhythmic panting of his dogs, their heads lifting in curiosity at the sound. Will's footsteps echoed softly as he descended the stairs. He wasn't entirely surprised that Alana had come—he had been expecting this conversation ever since that night at Hannibal's office when she had witnessed something that couldn't be easily explained away. But now, as he reached for the door, a different kind of tension settled over him. He had been counting on Alana's embarrassment at having to admit to what she saw being deterrent enough to keep her quiet. But the fact that she was here now, knocking on his door with such purpose, made him second-guess himself.

As his hand wrapped around the doorknob, a flood of possibilities raced through his mind. If Alana had gone to Jack, there would be no talking him off the ledge. Jack was relentless when he thought he was on the trail of something, and if he had even the slightest inkling of the truth… Will knew that would be a fight he couldn't win. He needed to figure out Alana's intentions—and fast.

Still, a flicker of smugness curled at the edges of his thoughts knowing that she had seen him — *really* seen him—buried to the hilt in Hannibal, a sight that had left no room for ambiguity about the nature of his relationship with the man who had once been her lover. But whatever satisfaction that brought him was tempered by the need to navigate this conversation carefully, to keep control of the situation before it spiraled into something he couldn't contain.

Will opened the door with a sense of purpose, his face a carefully composed mask of neutrality. As the door swung open, his eyes locked onto Alana's, and the air between them seemed to thicken. For a split second, neither of them moved, and he watched as a surge of arousal flickered to life behind her gaze, her pupils dilating just slightly at the sight of him. It was a reaction she couldn't entirely hide, no matter how hard she tried. Her breath faltered

almost imperceptibly, a tiny intake of air that betrayed the sudden rush of emotions she was struggling to suppress.

But there was something else there too—an almost imperceptible flicker of hurt, quickly buried beneath a forced, but still genuine, friendliness. Her lips curved into a polite smile, but Will could see the tension in her jaw, the way she tried to mask the emotions roiling beneath the surface.

Will didn't soften. Instead, he projected a prickliness, making no effort to hide the confusion laced with irritation that he felt at her unexpected presence. "Hello, Alana," he said, his voice clipped, each syllable carrying a subtle edge that mirrored the distance he was trying to maintain.

Alana hesitated, her expression faltering just enough to reveal a sliver of her discomfort. "Hi, Will," she replied, her tone carrying a hint of embarrassment, as though she knew she was intruding on something private. The silence that followed was heavy, stretching out between them as Will made no move to invite her in or continue the conversation. He simply stood there, his eyes boring into hers, keen and assessing, waiting. The awkwardness grew, hanging in the air like a thick fog, and Alana shifted uncomfortably, her smile becoming more strained as she tried to maintain her composure under the weight of his unyielding gaze.

She opened her mouth, then closed it again, the words tangled just beyond her reach. Will watched her struggle, taking a certain satisfaction in the discomfort he was causing. It was clear she wasn't entirely sure how to start, how to bring up the subject that had drawn her here in the first place. The seconds ticked by, each one amplifying the tension until it became almost unbearable.

Finally, after letting her squirm just long enough, Will decided to take mercy on her. "Are you here to talk about it?" he asked, his voice steady, though a hint of amusement played at the corners of his mouth.

They both knew what he meant by "it," and Will felt another surge of arousal go through Alana as she no doubt was recollecting what she had witnessed. He knew exactly why she was here—why she'd forced herself into this situation—and the prospect of the conversation was both intriguing and a little irritating. He could sense her unease, the way she seemed to be searching for the right words, and it piqued his curiosity just enough to see how she'd navigate the minefield she'd stepped into.

Alana stood on the threshold, a small, hesitant smile tugging at her lips. She looked different somehow—softer, perhaps, though her usual composed demeanor remained intact. In her hands, she held a neatly wrapped package, an olive branch in the form of a gift. Will's eyes flicked to it, his curiosity piqued.

"I brought you something," Alana said, her voice warmer than he had expected, though there was a trace of uncertainty lingering there as well. She extended the package toward him, her gaze steady but not challenging. Will accepted it, feeling the weight of the gesture more than the object itself.

Alana hesitated for just a moment before amending her statement with a sheepish grin. “Well, I actually brought something for the dogs,” she clarified, a touch of humor in her tone. “There’s a bakery near my house that specializes in gourmet dog treats. I thought… they might like them.”

Will glanced down at the package in his hands, now fully aware of the familiar scent of peanut butter and bacon wafting from it. Damn her for knowing exactly the right thing to bring, he thought, a mixture of irritation and reluctant appreciation stirring within him. She knew him well enough to know that appealing to his dogs was as good as appealing to him directly.

“Trying to get back in my good graces?” he asked, his tone light, though there was an undercurrent of something deeper, a quiet acknowledgment of the strain that had settled between them.

Alana sighed, her shoulders relaxing slightly as if she had been holding her breath. “Maybe,” she admitted, her voice softening further. “But I’m also here because… because I owe you an apology, Will.”

Will raised an eyebrow, his interest piqued as he stepped aside to let her in. “An apology for butting in where you don’t belong?” he asked flippantly, a smirk playing on his lips. The words were deliberately sharp, meant to prod at her, to see if he could get a reaction. It was clear what he was implying—her intrusion into his relationship with Hannibal, and her choice to stay and indulge in the voyeurism of their private moments. Will’s eyes narrowed slightly, watching her closely as she walked past him into the living room.

Alana paused mid-step, her back stiffening just a fraction, but she quickly recovered, continuing into the room without acknowledging the sting of his words. As she moved further inside, Winston wandered back in through the back dog door, his tail wagging lazily as he approached her. Alana’s expression softened at the sight of him, a small, genuine smile curving her lips as she bent down to pet him.

Finally, she straightened up, turning to face Will with a calm resolve. “I’ve been cruel to you,” Alana said finally, straightening up and meeting Will’s gaze with an openness that was rare for her. “And I’m sorry for that. I was… confused, and I let that confusion turn into something ugly.”

Will didn’t respond immediately, his eyes studying her as he tried to read the emotions playing across her face.

Alana took a deep breath, steeling herself to continue. “I had complicated feelings for you, Will,” she confessed, her voice tinged with regret. “And I was jealous—jealous of you, and jealous of Hannibal. When you tried to have Hannibal killed by proxy, it terrified me. I took it as a sign that you really were unstable, that you were dangerous. It made me question everything, especially because I cared so much about you… and I already cared a lot about Hannibal too. Two men I had romantic feelings for at different points in time, both on a path that seemed destined for destruction.”

Will’s expression softened slightly, though he remained silent, letting her speak.

Alana's attention shifted to the window, where the late afternoon sunlight cast soft shadows across her face. She gathered herself before continuing, her voice quieter now, a reluctant acknowledgment of the truth that had been there all along. "I thought I was doing what was best for Hannibal. I convinced myself that protecting him from you was the right thing to do, even if it meant pushing you away. But then… I saw you two together in the office…" She trailed off, a blush rising to her cheeks as the memory surfaced, the image of the intensity she had witnessed between them still vivid in her mind.

She cleared her throat, pushing past the embarrassment. "I could see that there was something between you and Hannibal," she continued, her voice tinged with a mix of resignation and acceptance. "Something complicated and intense. I'm not going to pretend to understand it, but I can see that Hannibal… that he's good for you. And it's not just that—you're good for him too. Whatever is going on between you two, it's clearly none of my business. I see now that I was wrong to interfere. You've been happier, Will. You look healthier. And while I have to do the perfunctory 'he's your therapist' thing, I'm not going to make a big deal about it."

Will let out a breath he hadn't realized he'd been holding, the tension in his shoulders easing as Alana's words settled over him like a balm. The tightness that had been coiled in his chest for days began to unravel, leaving him with a sense of tentative relief. The fire in the hearth crackled softly, the warmth of the flames contrasting with the coolness of the air that had settled around them. Outside, the evening had taken on a quiet stillness, the world hushed, holding its breath for whatever came next.

"I appreciate that, Alana," he said finally, his voice softer than before, almost fragile in its vulnerability. He glanced down at his hands, noticing the faint tremor that still lingered there, a physical manifestation of the emotional weight he had been carrying. "I know this hasn't been easy for you."

He looked up at her then, searching her face for any hint of hesitation, of doubt. There was something in her eyes, a quiet determination that told him she was here not out of obligation, but because she genuinely cared.

Will let his gaze linger on her for a moment longer, the softness in his expression almost convincing. But underneath, his thoughts were shifting, recalculating. He needed to know where things stood with Jack—needed to gauge if he had to do more damage control, if Alana was going to be a problem or an ally. He couldn't afford to misstep, not now.

"Have you told Jack what you saw?" Will's voice was steady, but there was an undercurrent of calculated curiosity, a probing edge to his question that he carefully kept out of his tone.

Alana hesitated, a faint blush coloring her cheeks as she looked away, her gaze flicking to the fire for a moment before returning to Will. The warmth of the flames reflected in her eyes, adding a softness to her expression that hadn't been there before. She let out a quiet sigh, her hands twisting together in her lap as she chose her words carefully.

"No," she admitted, her voice low, carrying the weight of a secret confession. "I haven't told Jack." Her eyes fell to the floor, a slight furrow forming between her brows as she continued, "I wanted to talk to you first."

Will watched her closely, the way she avoided his gaze, the subtle tension in her posture. There was a vulnerability there, a hesitance that he could work with. He needed to keep this in his control, needed to make sure she understood just enough without giving too much away.

She paused, her eyes lifting to meet his again, and in that moment, Will could see the conflict in her, the struggle between her commitment to doing what she thought ethical and the guilt she felt over how she had treated Will. “I won’t pretend to understand everything about your relationship with Hannibal,” she said, her tone gentle but firm. “But… I can see that you’re good together. That you’re good for each other. It’s complicated, and I don’t know if I’ll ever fully grasp it, but I do know that I don’t want to cause any harm by going to Jack without understanding the full picture.”

He let the silence stretch between them for a moment, the weight of her words hanging in the air like a fine mist. Will sighed, just barely, as if the breath had escaped him involuntarily, a brief crack in the armor he wanted Alana to think he was holding together by sheer force of will. His eyes softened, his expression shifting to one of quiet vulnerability, the kind that invited trust, that subtly beckoned her to lean in, to believe him.

“Alana,” Will began, his voice quiet, tinged with a familiar undercurrent of anxiety. “I’m... glad you’re not going to Jack. I’ve been afraid—” He faltered, eyes dropping to the floor as if searching for the right words in the spaces between the tiles. When he looked back up, something raw flickered in his gaze—relief, maybe, but with a trace of something darker. “I don’t want Jack to know because... the first time I told him about Hannibal, he thought I was... unstable.” Will’s eyes met hers briefly, a flash of bitterness passing through them—a silent accusation, a look that said, *you didn’t believe me either.*

Will started to pace, his movements restless but calculated, each step designed to give the impression of a man grappling with inner turmoil. His hands twitched as if seeking an outlet for emotions too tangled to unravel. Alana shifted slightly, her expression caught between regret and understanding, but before she could respond, Will softened his tone, a deliberate shift that suggested he was offering her a reprieve. “And… you were right to doubt me,” he added, a small, placating smile touching his lips. “I was in a dark place, and given everything that was happening, I can’t blame you—or Jack—for questioning me. It was the rational thing to do.”

He let his gaze fall to the table between them, his fingers tracing a random pattern on the surface, but his body remained in motion, a subtle but constant agitation that hinted at the struggle within him. “I was wrong. Obviously,” he said with a self-deprecating grin, the kind that invited her into the joke but also made light of something far heavier. The grin was fleeting, quickly replaced by a look of vulnerability, as though the admission had cost him something.

“The truth is, I was… I was a mess. A disaster,” he continued, his voice softening even further, almost like he were speaking to himself, letting Alana in on a private confession. His fingers stilled for a moment on the table, the movement stopping as though the weight of his own words had finally anchored him. “The encephalitis… it twisted everything—my perception of reality, of the truth itself. It felt like I was trapped in my own head, doubting

everything I saw, everything I knew." His voice took on a distant, hollow quality, echoing the confusion and despair of that time, as though he were reliving it all over again. He paused just long enough to let the gravity of his words sink in before continuing.

"And Hannibal... I thought he had rejected me." He didn't look up, didn't meet her eyes, letting the silence stretch out just long enough to suggest that this was a wound that still festered. In truth, Will was pulling her into his pain, making her see him as someone broken and yet achingly human, someone deserving of her understanding, her sympathy, not her judgment.

But behind the carefully constructed facade, Will was calculating, measuring her reactions, adjusting his approach with every subtle shift in her expression. He needed Alana to see him as fragile, to see Jack as the one who was pushing him too far, who was threatening to unravel the delicate balance he had managed to achieve. He was playing on her guilt, on her lingering feelings for both him and Hannibal, weaving a narrative that placed him at the center, vulnerable yet strong, a victim of circumstances beyond his control.

His pacing slowed, his steps becoming more deliberate as he chose his next words carefully. "Hannibal… he's the only person who's ever truly seen me," Will confessed, his voice tinged with something raw and painful. "When I thought I'd lost that—lost him—it was more than I could bear. The idea that the one person who understood me, who saw me, didn't want me anymore… it was excruciating, beyond anything I'd ever imagined."

For a moment, the truth of his words resonated within him, and Will allowed himself to linger on that pain. It was real, after all, and the best lies were always grounded in truth. He knew this better than anyone. "I thought I had lost him, and in my grief… I didn't know how to handle it. I lashed out. I didn't know what else to do."

Alana's face softened, her eyes reflecting a sympathy that Will recognized all too well. She reached out as if to offer comfort, and Will couldn't help but feel a pang of satisfaction, a smugness that she was buying this so completely. He let her reaction fuel his next words, knowing he had her exactly where he needed her to be.

"But something changed, and now Jack has this idea that Hannibal *is* the Ripper, and I have no idea why," Will said, his voice tinged with frustration. "It's like he's suddenly convinced himself that it's true, and he's ready to act on it without hesitation." His tone sharpened, the weight of the situation clearly unsettling him. "Jack even wanted me to pretend to be Hannibal's friend again, to get close to him just to dig up evidence. He thought I could go back to how things were like I could somehow fool Hannibal and myself in the process."

Will paused, noting the way Alana's expression, previously sympathetic, shifted into something sharper—an edge of concern, maybe even alarm. He stopped pacing, turning to face her directly, his eyes searching hers with a newfound intensity, looking for any sign of understanding—or better yet, agreement. "I couldn't go through with it, Alana. I tried, but I couldn't do it. Jack seemed to accept that, and I'm pretty sure he's dropped it for now, but if he heard that Hannibal and I were together—like you saw…" He trailed off, letting the

implication hang between them, the gravity of the situation clear in his expression. “I don’t know what he’d do.”

Will’s voice dropped to a near whisper, his tone heavy with the weight of his confession. “Jack might see what happened before and think I’m falling apart again. And if that happens… if Jack starts to doubt me, to question whether I’m in control…” He trailed off, the implication hanging in the air between them. “I don’t want Jack to see me as compromised, or unstable again, Alana.”

He watched as Alana processed his words, the carefully woven tapestry of half-truths and emotional rawness designed to draw her closer, to make her see Jack as the one who was losing control. He saw her swallow hard, her gaze flickering with uncertainty and a growing fear. The lines of her face tightened with the realization of what Will was suggesting—of the danger Jack’s obsession could pose.

She nodded slowly, running a hand through her hair. “I don’t want to hurt either of you,” she admitted, her voice quieter, weighed down by the enormity of what Will had confessed. “I want to protect you both… from Jack’s fervor, from the consequences of a misunderstanding. If… if you’re sure that this is what’s best, then I’ll… I’ll trust you, Will. I won’t go running to Jack.”

Relief crept through Will, subtle but unmistakable, though he kept it restrained, letting it surface only in the slight easing of his rigid stance. He hesitated before reaching out, placing his hand over hers with a touch that was as much about grounding himself as it was about gratitude. The connection lingered—just long enough to feel real.

“Alana,” he murmured, his voice low and a bit rough around the edges. “Thank you... for believing in me. It’s—” He paused, searching for the right words, his gaze briefly flicking down to their intertwined hands before returning to hers. “It’s more than I deserve, and I promise... I won’t let you down.”

He let the silence stretch for a beat, then added quietly, “And I’m sorry. For how I’ve treated you lately. I know I haven’t been... easy to deal with. You didn’t deserve that.”

Will watched as the tension in her expression softened, the apology—a blend of sincerity and calculation—landing just as he’d hoped. He noticed the way her shoulders relaxed, the faintest sigh slipping from her lips.

Before Alana could respond, the sound of a car pulling up outside interrupted the moment. Will’s head turned instinctively toward the window, and a genuine smile spread across his face as he recognized the vehicle. Hannibal was here, earlier than expected. The timing couldn’t have been better—or worse, depending on how you looked at it.

Alana gave Will a questioning glance, her eyebrows knitting together in mild confusion. The fact that she didn’t recognize the sound of Hannibal’s car soothed something in Will he didn’t know was restless—a small, but significant reassurance that Will knew things about Hannibal that she did not. A few moments later, the front door opened, and Hannibal stepped inside with his usual quiet grace, arms laden with his overnight bag, a brown paper bag of groceries, and another smaller, neatly wrapped package. The sight of Hannibal so clearly prepared to

stay the night sent a surge of satisfaction through Will, a warm feeling that settled deep in his chest.

Hannibal's presence filled the room as he entered, the subtle scent of his cologne—a blend of something earthy and dark, with just a hint of spice—wafting in with him. His movements were fluid, unhurried, the kind of effortless elegance that always seemed to draw the eye. His tailored coat clung perfectly to his broad shoulders, the rich fabric catching the light as he moved. His sharp, knowing eyes immediately found Will's, and for a brief moment, the room shrank around them, leaving nothing but the two of them in focus.

But then Hannibal's gaze shifted to Alana, and his lips twitched with faint amusement. The smile was small, almost imperceptible, but it carried a weight of understanding that made Alana straighten her posture slightly, bracing herself without even realizing it.

"Alana," Hannibal greeted smoothly, his voice carrying that familiar, velvety tone that seemed to wrap itself around the listener, drawing them in. "I wasn't expecting to see you here. A pleasant surprise." His eyes flicked briefly to Will, the hint of amusement there unmistakable.

As Hannibal spoke, he set down his overnight bag with deliberate care, followed by the paper bag of groceries, which rustled softly as it settled on the floor. The other package, smaller and more carefully wrapped, was placed on the counter with a quiet thud, its contents a mystery, but clearly something significant. Hannibal then turned his attention to his coat, slipping it off with a fluid motion that revealed the crisp lines of his tailored suit beneath. The fabric clung to his frame in all the right places, accentuating his broad shoulders and narrow waist. Will couldn't help but admire the way Hannibal moved, every gesture precise and deliberate, a controlled elegance that was undeniably attractive. The sight of Hannibal's fingers deftly unbuttoning his coat, the subtle shift of muscles beneath his shirt as he hung it up, sent a warm rush through Will, stirring something possessive and deeply satisfied within him.

Alana straightened up, clearly taken off guard by Hannibal's arrival but doing her best to compose herself. "Hannibal," she replied, managing a smile that was just a touch too tight. "I was just… catching up with Will."

Will noticed the way her eyes darted between the two of them, a flicker of something more than just discomfort passing through her gaze—something that looked suspiciously like arousal. Her pupils dilated just slightly, and her breath seemed to hitch for the briefest of moments. Will was certain Hannibal caught it as well if the mischievous smile that twisted his lips was anything to go by.

"Catching up," Hannibal repeated, his voice velvety smooth, but with a deliberate pause, obviously savoring the taste of the words before speaking them. "That's such an innocuous way to put it, isn't it? Catching up." Hannibal's voice was smooth as silk, barely concealing his taunt. His gaze lingered on Alana, holding her eyes just a fraction longer than necessary, daring her to relive the memory that they all knew was simmering just beneath the surface. The glint in his eyes sharpened, a barely veiled challenge that seemed to say, *Yes, we know exactly what you saw, and we know how much you enjoyed it.*

“Yes,” Hannibal continued, letting the word hang in the air for a moment before finishing, “I imagine there’s much to catch up on, especially after… everything.” The deliberate hesitation before that last word was impossible to miss, a sly nod to the scene she had witnessed, a scene that was anything but forgettable. His smile grew a touch more wicked, a calculated expression that suggested he was fully aware of the effect his words were having on her.

Alana’s cheeks flushed, the color deepening as the weight of Hannibal’s insinuations pressed down on her. Her earlier confidence wavered, her attempt at a composed smile faltering under the combined pressure of Hannibal’s knowing gaze and the memory of what she had seen.

Will couldn’t help the grin that spread across his face as he watched the exchange. Hannibal’s presence had instantly shifted the dynamic in the room, and Will felt a thrill at the way Alana was struggling to keep her composure.

“I hope I’m not interrupting,” Hannibal added, though his tone suggested that he didn’t particularly mind if he was.

“Not at all,” Will interjected smoothly, moving to stand beside Hannibal, the ease between them apparent. “Alana and I were just wrapping up.”

As he turned slightly toward Hannibal, their eyes met, and for a brief moment, the world seemed to narrow to just the two of them. There was a flicker of something mischievous in Hannibal’s gaze, something that made Will’s pulse quicken in anticipation. He knew what was coming, could almost feel the magnetic pull between them before it happened.

Without breaking eye contact, Hannibal’s hand slid to the back of Will’s neck, his fingers brushing against the skin with a possessive yet graceful touch. He didn’t hesitate, leaning in to capture Will’s lips in a kiss that was far from chaste. The kiss was deliberate, sensual, filling the room with a tangible tension, Hannibal savoring the moment, making a point that Alana couldn’t possibly miss.

Will responded in kind, his hand instinctively resting on Hannibal’s chest, fingers curling into the fabric of his shirt as he leaned into the kiss, deepening it. There was an unspoken communication between them, a shared understanding that this kiss was as much a statement as it was an expression of their connection.

When Hannibal finally pulled back, it was with a slow, almost languid movement, his eyes lingering on Will’s for a moment longer than necessary, a subtle smirk playing on his lips.

“Yes,” Alana agreed quickly, her voice betraying a slight edge of discomfort. She averted her eyes, trying to mask the blush that had crept into her cheeks, but the slight tremor in her hands, as she adjusted her bag, didn’t go unnoticed. “I should be going anyway.” She glanced between the two men, her resolve wavering under the weight of whatever thoughts were racing through her mind. “Thank you for… for listening, Will. And, Hannibal, it was… good to see you.”

Hannibal inclined his head gracefully. “The pleasure is mine, Alana. I’m sure we’ll have the opportunity to… catch up further.”

Alana's lips pressed into a thin line, and she nodded once before turning to leave. As she walked out, Will caught the briefest flicker of something in her expression—a mix of embarrassment and perhaps a lingering unease. It was clear she was still processing everything, but for now, she was holding it together.

Will waited until the door closed behind her before turning to Hannibal, his grin broadening. "You're early."

"Darling," Hannibal began, his voice tinged with a teasing lilt that Will had come to associate with these quieter, more playful moments between them. "I think paint is supposed to go on the walls, not in your hair or on your skin." There was a playful glint in his eyes as he stepped closer, the distance between them closing with each measured step.

Will's heart gave a small, involuntary flutter at the sight of that look, the way it softened the usually sharp lines of Hannibal's features. He could feel the warmth of Hannibal's presence even before he was close enough to touch, a comforting heat that seemed to banish the day's fatigue. As Hannibal reached him, he lifted a hand to brush a stray lock of hair away from Will's forehead, his touch gentle, familiar.

Will couldn't help but laugh softly at Hannibal's teasing, the sound low and content as he leaned into the touch. "Well, I wanted to get a jump on some house projects," he replied, his tone equally playful, though there was an underlying note of satisfaction that matched the calm happiness that filled the room. "And then Alana interrupted me." His face twisted slightly in distaste, the awkwardness still barely lingering in the room.

Hannibal's eyes narrowed just a fraction, a subtle shift that only Will would notice. "And what did our dear Alana want?" he asked, his tone casual but laced with curiosity, as he slowly trailed his fingers down Will's temple, tracing the line of his jaw.

Will sighed softly, enjoying the sensation of Hannibal's touch as he recounted the conversation. "She came to apologize for being cruel," he began, a hint of amusement coloring his voice. "She admitted she was confused and let that confusion turn into something ugly. And then I made sure she wouldn't go running to Jack."

Hannibal's expression turned coldly amused, the warmth in his smile vanishing. "Alana has always been easy to sway," he murmured, his voice carrying a hint of dark amusement. "She wants to believe the best in people, which makes her simple to keep on your side… if necessary."

Will met Hannibal's gaze, a flicker of satisfaction in his eyes as he considered how easily Alana had been manipulated. "Exactly," he replied, his tone carrying a note of agreement. The tension from earlier had all but dissipated, leaving behind a shared sense of accomplishment.

"Oh, and she brought the dogs some treats as a peace offering," Will added, his eyes landing on the bag where Alana had dropped it on the couch. The bag sat there, an innocuous reminder of Alana's attempt to mend fences.

Hannibal's face twisted in distaste, his lips curling slightly as he considered the notion. He reached for a bag of dog treats that Will had left on the counter, his brow furrowing as he examined the packaging. With a deliberate slowness, he turned the bag over in his hands, his eyes scanning the list of ingredients with growing disapproval. "Store-bought dog treats?" he remarked, his voice carrying a hint of disdain that bordered on genuine offense. His fingers traced the words on the bag, as if confirming what he was reading could indeed be as substandard as he suspected. "Subpar at best," he declared, the disdain in his tone sharpening as he read through the artificial additives and fillers listed on the packaging.

There was a faint but unmistakable shudder in Hannibal's voice, as though the very idea of feeding such inferior products to the dogs offended every sensibility he possessed. He set the package down with an air of finality, as if dismissing it entirely from his mind. "Tomorrow, I'll bake something suitable for them—something worthy of their refined tastes." His tone was decisive, carrying a determined edge that suggested this was not just a casual offer but a matter of great importance, one that would be addressed with the same level of care and attention Hannibal afforded all things.

Hannibal's gaze flicked to Will, who had been watching the entire exchange with an amused glint in his eyes. There was something endearing about the way Hannibal took even this small matter so seriously, as though ensuring the dogs had the best was a reflection of his commitment to Will as well.

Will rolled his eyes, though his expression was infused with fondness. "Of course you will," he said, his voice softening. The affection in his gaze was undeniable, his heart swelling with the warmth of their shared domesticity. "Nothing but the best for my dogs, right?"

"Our dogs," Hannibal corrected, his tone lightly teasing as he leaned in closer, his breath warm against Will's cheek. There was a playful challenge in his eyes, a promise of more to come as his lips brushed against Will's in a kiss that was both tender and full of lingering heat.

"Oh, they're our dogs now?" Will asked playfully, though he couldn't hide the way his stomach swooped at the thought of Hannibal considering the dogs theirs, not just his. The idea of Hannibal embracing not just him, but the small family they had created, filled Will with a warmth that spread through his chest and settled deep within him.

Hannibal's lips quirked into a knowing smirk as he pulled back slightly, just enough to meet Will's eyes. "Of course," he murmured, his voice soft but firm, conveying that the matter was already decided. "Speaking of which," he continued, his tone taking on a more playful edge as he turned toward the package he had dropped on the counter, "I brought something for them myself."

He reached out, his fingers brushing against the paper wrapping. The texture was smooth beneath his fingertips, the edges crisp and perfectly folded, and he knew that Hannibal had taken great care in even the smallest of preparations. Will hesitated for a fraction of a second, the anticipation building as he allowed himself a brief moment to wonder, to imagine what Hannibal might have chosen for them.

As he began to unwrap it, he couldn't help but notice the way Hannibal's eyes lingered on him, watching his every movement with a quiet intensity that only deepened the suspense. Will's heart thudded in his chest, each tear of the paper amplifying the sense of expectation. Finally, with the wrapping peeled back, he lifted the lid of the box to reveal its contents.

Inside, he found seven high-quality, brand-new dog collars, each one meticulously chosen and correctly sized for each of his dogs. The rich leather was soft yet durable, the craftsmanship evident in every stitch. The collars weren't just functional; they were elegant, a testament to Hannibal's refined taste and his unwavering commitment to excellence in even the smallest of things.

Attached to each collar was a brand-new tag, engraved with each dog's name and both Will and Hannibal's phone numbers as contact information. Will stared down at the collars, his breath catching in his throat as the significance of the gesture washed over him. He turned to Hannibal, a question in his eyes, but before he could speak, Hannibal gave a small, dismissive wave of his hand, downplaying the importance of what he had done.

"I noticed Winston's collar was starting to fray," Hannibal said casually, his tone deliberately nonchalant. "It seemed prudent to replace it before it became an issue. And while I was at it, I thought it only fitting that all of them receive an upgrade—something of the quality they deserve." He offered a faint, almost teasing smile as if this were merely a practical decision, nothing more.

But Will could see through the act, could feel the depth of the thoughtfulness behind the gesture. It wasn't just about the collars—it was about the quiet, unspoken way Hannibal had woven himself into every aspect of Will's life, ensuring that even the smallest details were taken care of, that every need was anticipated.

"It's no trouble," Hannibal added, as if sensing Will's overwhelming emotion and wanting to brush it aside, to keep the moment from becoming too heavy. "Just a small consideration."

But for Will, it was anything but small. The practicality of the gift was undeniable, but what struck him more was the way Hannibal had done it without fanfare, without seeking acknowledgment—just quietly taking care of something that mattered to Will. It was the kind of gesture that spoke of deep, genuine care, the kind that only someone truly invested in your life would make.

He looked up at Hannibal, frozen in place as love surged through him, powerful and undeniable. The realization that Hannibal was all in, that he had embraced not just Will but the entire life that came with him, hit Will with the force of a tidal wave. Without a second thought, Will flung the collars onto the counter, the leather and metal clattering against the surface as he closed the distance between them in a heartbeat. His hands found Hannibal's shoulders, fingers digging into the firm muscle beneath the fabric of his shirt as he pushed Hannibal back against the opposite counter. The force of the movement was almost desperate, fueled by a fierce need to communicate everything he was feeling—gratitude, love, and the overwhelming joy of being understood so completely.

Will's lips crashed against Hannibal's, the kiss anything but gentle. It was hungry, demanding, his mouth moving with an urgency that left no room for hesitation. His teeth

grazed Hannibal's lower lip, a sharp tug that was both possessive and teasing, before his tongue swept in, claiming and exploring with a fervor that bordered on wild.

Hannibal responded instantly, a low, appreciative sound rumbling in his throat as his hands slid down Will's back, fingers pressing into the curve of his spine, pulling him impossibly closer. The kiss deepened, Hannibal's tongue meeting Will's in a dance of heat and need, each stroke stoking the fire that had ignited between them. The taste of Hannibal—dark, complex, with a hint of something tantalizingly sweet—washed over Will, sending a tremor of pleasure racing down his spine.

The warmth of Hannibal's body against his own, the solid presence that anchored him, only served to intensify the sensory overload. Every brush of their lips, every scrape of teeth and tangle of tongues was electric, sending sparks of sensation coursing through Will's veins. He could feel the rapid beat of Hannibal's heart against his chest, mirroring the frantic pounding of his own, as the world around them seemed to fade away, leaving only the two of them locked together.

Will's hands roamed, sliding up to tangle in Hannibal's hair, pulling him even deeper into the kiss, as Hannibal's hands moved lower, gripping Will's hips with a possessive force that sent a shockwave of desire through his entire body.

Hannibal pulled back just enough to speak, his voice a low, breathless murmur against Will's lips. "You're covered in paint, darling," he quipped, his tone laced with a wicked edge. "We should get you cleaned up before you get green on anything else."

Will chuckled, the sound vibrating through him as he pressed his forehead to Hannibal's, their breaths mingling in the scant space between them. "That sounds like a good idea," he replied, his voice rough with arousal, the implication behind his words clear.

The suggestion was all it took. Hands scrambled at clothing, buttons popping open with frenzied urgency as they stumbled toward the bathroom, lips barely leaving one another for a breath. Will's fingers worked to undo Hannibal's shirt, tearing at the fabric in his haste, the sensation of Hannibal's skin beneath his fingertips sending another wave of heat crashing through him. The shirt hit the floor, followed quickly by Will's, the cool air doing nothing to quell the fire raging between them.

Their mouths collided again, tongues dueling for dominance as they fumbled their way down the hallway. Hannibal's hands were everywhere—sliding over Will's chest, down his back, tugging at the waistband of his jeans with a hunger that matched Will's own. The desperate need to feel, to touch, to claim one another had them moving in a frenzied dance of desire, the sound of zippers and fabric hitting the floor echoing through the house.

By the time they reached the bathroom, they were both half-naked, the remnants of their clothing hanging from their bodies in disarray. Will's hands were trembling with the need to feel every inch of Hannibal's skin, to explore the contours of his body with a feverish intensity. He yanked open the shower door, his breath catching as Hannibal's hands slid over his hips, guiding him inside with a firm grip that left no room for argument.

With a quick twist of the faucet, Hannibal turned on the shower, the spray of hot water immediately cascading down, the sound almost deafening in the silence, a steamy haze filling the room that curled around them like a physical presence, thick and humid. The heat rose rapidly, making the air feel heavy with the promise of what was to come. Patience frayed to the edges, they clawed at the last remnants of fabric, their movements frenetic and clumsy with desire, their hands desperate to feel the warmth of bare skin against skin.

Will's breath caught as Hannibal's lips found the hollow of his throat, the graze of teeth against the sensitive skin sending a shiver of sensation that rippled through him, echoing down to his toes. The cool bite of the tile against his back only served to heighten the contrast with Hannibal's searing mouth, every kiss, every scrape of teeth a deliberate, exquisite torture. Hannibal's hands were everywhere—sliding over his hips, up his chest, tracing the taut lines of muscle with a reverence that made Will's pulse race, each touch a silent claim. Will's hands were just as eager, sliding down Hannibal's back, pulling him closer, their bodies pressing together with an intensity that left no space between them, their slick skin sliding against one another.

Their mouths met again in a bruising kiss, teeth clashing, tongues dueling, both of them desperate to consume and be consumed. The taste of Hannibal—salt and something darker, richer—intoxicating and maddening, fueling the fire that burned hotter with every passing second. The wet slide of their bodies, the rough scrape of stubble, the slick heat of their cocks grinding together—each sensation was a spark, igniting a fire that roared hotter with every second. The hard length of Hannibal's cock pressed against his own made Will's head spin with need, every touch sending a bolt of raw desire straight through him.

The water pounded down on them, mixing with the sweat that slicked their bodies as Will's fingers found the curve of Hannibal's ass, squeezing tightly as he ground their hips together, the rough friction sending shockwaves through both their bodies. Hannibal's low, guttural moan reverberated through Will's chest, the sound sinking into his bones and making his blood thrum with need.

As Will looked up, his eyes darkened with anticipation, he felt the heady weight of Hannibal's gaze on him—piercing, but softened by a rawness that only Will was allowed to see. "I think," Will began, his voice rough with desire as his hands roamed down Hannibal's chest, tracing the lines of muscle beneath his fingertips, feeling the way Hannibal shuddered at the contact, the way his pulse thrummed just beneath the surface, "I want to properly thank you for those dog collars."

Before Hannibal could respond, Will dropped to his knees, the cool tile biting into the skin of his knees, but the discomfort was barely a whisper compared to the thrill racing through him. His heart nearly stopped as he gazed up at Hannibal, taking in the sight of him, every inch of him exposed and glorious—Hannibal's power radiating off him, but tempered by the vulnerability of this moment, of giving himself over to Will. Without hesitation, Will leaned forward, his mouth descending on Hannibal's cock with an eagerness that surprised even him, the heat and weight of it a perfect fit, sliding over his tongue and filling him in a way that felt almost inevitable.

Hannibal's cock was hot and heavy on his tongue, the taste of him—salty, musky, utterly intoxicating—sent a jolt of electricity through Will, his fingers digging into Hannibal's thighs with fervor. He took him down in one smooth motion, lips stretching around the thickness, feeling the pulse of every heartbeat, the sensation anchoring him in this moment, this act of worship. A low groan escaped Hannibal, vibrating through Will's lips, making his own arousal throb. But he shoved that aside, his focus entirely on the way Hannibal trembled beneath his touch.

Every twitch, every pulse of Hannibal's cock resonated on Will's tongue, the way his thighs quivered under his palms, how his breath hitched with each deep thrust. Will's world contracted to just this—Hannibal filling his mouth, the musky scent of arousal thick in the steamy air, Hannibal's fingers tightening in his hair, not guiding, but gripping, as if Will were the only thing keeping him tethered to reality. He steadied himself, hands firm on Hannibal's hips, reveling in the slip of control, the unraveling of that carefully maintained composure under the relentless pressure of his mouth.

Steam enveloped them, the water cascading down their bodies in heated rivulets, tracing muscle and bone, while the fire inside Will burned hotter, stoked by Hannibal's every hitched breath, his fingers tangling in Will's hair as if seeking stability against the pleasure storm Will was determined to unleash.

His world had shrunk to this single act—Hannibal's cock stretching his lips, throat tightening with every thrust, every ounce of him devoted to pushing Hannibal to the edge. The obscene sounds of sucking, the wet clash of lips, tongue, and flesh, filled the room, mingling with the guttural noises Hannibal couldn't suppress. The ache low in Will's belly throbbed persistently, but he buried it, his concentration locked entirely on Hannibal, on giving him everything.

Hannibal's control was slipping; Will could feel it in the way his hips began to stutter, the way his breath grew ragged, every exhale a desperate gasp. Will hollowed his cheeks, taking Hannibal deeper, his own throat constricting around the thickness of him, the taste of Hannibal's arousal driving him to quicken his pace, to suck harder, faster, the need to make Hannibal lose control overwhelming every other thought.

"Will—" Hannibal's voice was tight, strained, and it sent a thrill through Will, a wave of heat surging through him at the sound, the knowledge that he was the one to bring Hannibal to this point. He quickened his pace, sucking harder, faster, determined to pull every ounce of pleasure from him.

And then, with a deep, shuddering groan, Hannibal came, the hot, salty rush of his release flooding Will's mouth, hitting the back of his throat with a force that left him breathless, drowning in the taste and feel of Hannibal's surrender. Will swallowed around him, the sensation drawing another low moan from Hannibal as his body tensed, then relaxed, the tension draining away with the last tremors of pleasure.

Will finally pulled back, his lips tingling, red and swollen from the rough use, his breath coming in short, satisfied bursts. He looked up at Hannibal, eyes glazed with lust, a smirk playing on his lips as he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, the taste of Hannibal still lingering on his tongue, making his blood sing with triumph. The look in Hannibal's eyes

was raw, appreciative, and it sent a surge of satisfaction through Will, knowing he'd brought the man to this point.

"Consider that my thank you," Will murmured, his voice thick with arousal, a teasing edge to his words as he remained on his knees, savoring the sight of Hannibal in the aftermath, every inch of him still emanating power, yet softened by the pleasure Will had just given him.

The fire cast flickering shadows across the room, its warm glow bathing the space in a golden hue that softened the edges of the clutter that defined Will's living room. The warmth from the hearth seeped into every corner, creating a cozy atmosphere that wrapped around them like a comforting embrace. The scent of aged wood and smoke lingered in the air, mingling with the more subtle aroma of the dinner they had shared earlier—roast "duck" with a red wine reduction, accompanied by delicate truffle risotto. The rich, earthy scent of the truffles mingled with the smoky notes of the fire, creating an ambiance that was both rustic and refined, a blend of their worlds brought together in this intimate setting.

After the shower, while toweling off, Hannibal had asked to see the room Will had been working on. Will, feeling a mix of pride and vulnerability, had led him upstairs. As soon as they entered the freshly painted room, Hannibal's eyes lit up with approval. Without hesitation, he began discussing ideas for the interior design—how a deep mahogany bedframe would complement the rich green walls, the type of lighting that would best accentuate the room's natural warmth, and the texture of the bedding that would create an inviting, tactile contrast to the coolness of the tile underfoot. Will had listened, both amused and moved by Hannibal's enthusiasm, still somehow surprised by how much he wanted this domesticity with him. The tenderness in Hannibal's voice as he spoke, the way his hand rested lightly on Will's shoulder, grounding them both in the moment, had left Will with a warmth that lingered long after they had returned downstairs.

Will leaned back against the arm of the couch, one hand cradling a glass of whiskey, the amber liquid catching the firelight with each slight movement. Hannibal was nestled against him, his back resting against the worn fabric of the couch, head comfortably on Will's chest. The weight of Hannibal's presence was a grounding force, the rise and fall of his breathing a steady rhythm that matched the subtle beats of Will's heart. Hannibal's arm lay draped across Will's middle, fingers resting lightly against his side, a touch so casual yet so deeply intimate.

Will's free hand, the one not occupied with his whiskey, moved almost absently through Hannibal's loose hair. The usual carefully gelled style had given way to soft strands that slipped easily through Will's fingers. Each slow, unhurried pass was a quiet exploration of the texture and weight of Hannibal's hair. With every gentle stroke, Hannibal responded with small, contented rumbles—a sound that could only be described as purring. It was an unconscious reaction, a sign of how completely Hannibal had relaxed into the moment, his usual guarded composure softened into something far more vulnerable and intimate. As Will's fingers found a particularly sensitive spot on Hannibal's scalp, just above the nape of his neck, Hannibal's head arched slightly into the touch, seeking more of the gentle pressure.

The dogs, ever-present and loyal, were sprawled in various positions of contentment around the room, their bodies rising and falling in sync with the calm atmosphere. After showing off

his progress in the bedroom, Will and Hannibal had taken off the old, worn collars and carefully fastened the new ones around each dog's neck—every tail wagged with excitement, their eyes bright with curiosity at the latest, luxurious additions. Hannibal's hands had been steady, gentle, as he adjusted each collar, ensuring a perfect fit. The dogs had practically bounded out the door afterward, eager for their evening romp. They went racing through the woods, the crisp evening air filled with the sounds of their paws thudding against the earth, leaves rustling as they dashed through the underbrush, and the occasional bark of excitement. Hannibal and Will had followed at a leisurely pace, watching as the dogs zigzagged ahead, their energy boundless, fueled by the thrill of the chase.

Now, tired from the adventure, they were more subdued than usual, their weariness adding to the room's tranquil aura. Zoe, with her distinctive underbite that gave her an almost perpetual grin, had claimed the spot closest to the fire. She curled up into a tight ball, her soft fur reflecting the warm glow of the flames. Her soft snuffling was more pronounced than the others, a gentle, rhythmic sound that blended with the crackle of the fire.

The room around them felt more alive than it had in years. It wasn't just his life that filled the space anymore; Hannibal had slowly, almost imperceptibly, integrated himself into it. A spare scalpel gleamed faintly from its place on a shelf, nestled among the disarray of books and mementos. Surprisingly, it didn't look out of place—its presence, sharp and precise, somehow harmonized with the surrounding clutter, as if it had always belonged there. On the piano, one of Hannibal's half-finished compositions lay open, the sheet music covered in precise, elegant notes that spoke of the man who had composed them. Nearby, on Will's fly-tying desk, a sketchbook lay open beside a set of charcoals, the rough edges of a detailed drawing visible beneath the flickering light of the fire—a sketch of Will's hands, captured in the act of tying a fly, the lines so exact they seemed to breathe.

The presence of Hannibal, now entwined with him on the couch, filled the room with a sense of completion, a warmth that went beyond the fire's reach. It was as if Hannibal's influence had woven itself into the very fabric of the house, his meticulous nature blending seamlessly with Will's chaotic energy, creating a space that was uniquely theirs.

As Will's fingers wandered through Hannibal's hair, they found another particularly sensitive spot on his scalp. Hannibal arched more into Will's hand, his body instinctively seeking out the touch with a soft, contented sigh. The sound was barely audible but sent a warm shiver through Will, his own body responding to the subtle intimacy of the moment. Will couldn't help but chuckle softly, the sound low and warm in the quiet room, a vibration that seemed to resonate through Hannibal as well.

"You know," he began, his voice tinged with a lazy, affectionate drawl, "I've never really seen the appeal of owning a cat. I've had dogs my whole life, clearly…" He trailed off, his fingers continuing their slow, deliberate exploration of Hannibal's hair, savoring the silky texture as it slipped between his fingers. "But I'm starting to understand."

The moment the words left his lips, he felt Hannibal tense slightly against him, a subtle but unmistakable bristle at the implication. Will's chuckle deepened, his chest rumbling with the sound, and he could feel the way it echoed through Hannibal's body, making the tension in his muscles more pronounced. "Your reaction just proves my point," Will teased, his tone

playful as he glanced down at Hannibal, his smile broadening at the sight of the dignified annoyance written across his features.

Hannibal's eyes narrowed, the intensity of his gaze sharpened as he met Will's teasing with a smoldering look that sent a ripple of warmth through Will's body. "Dogs are loyal to a fault," Hannibal countered smoothly, his voice a low, rich murmur that seemed to wrap around Will like a caress. His breath, warm and teasing, brushed against Will's neck, stirring something deep within him. "A cat, however, requires a more discerning touch." He shifted slightly, pressing closer to Will, and the proximity of Hannibal's mouth to his skin had Will trembling, his heart jumping at the subtle suggestion of Hannibal's words. He raised an eyebrow at Will as if daring him to continue.

Will's grin only widened, clearly enjoying the exchange. "Oh, I'm sure," he replied, his tone dripping with feigned skepticism as he trailed his fingers lightly along Hannibal's scalp, eliciting a soft hum from the man nestled against him. The sound, deep and resonant, sent a pleasant warmth curling in Will's belly. "But I've got to admit, you're pretty good at the purring part."

Hannibal huffed, a sound that was part amusement, part disdain, but there was a warmth in his eyes that betrayed his pleasure in the teasing. He settled back into Will's chest, the movement smooth and languid, a deliberate press of his body against Will's that sent a spark of heat through the air between them. Will felt the warmth of Hannibal's breath as it mingled with his own, the sensation intimate and grounding as if the very act of breathing together was a shared secret. For a moment, he merely glared up at Will, his expression imperious, silently demanding that Will resume his ministrations.

Will held out for a beat longer, savoring the look on Hannibal's face before relenting. With a soft chuckle, he returned his fingers to Hannibal's hair, stroking gently in that way he knew Hannibal couldn't resist. Each pass of his fingers was slow, deliberate, coaxing a deeper, more contented sigh from Hannibal. The sound sent a warm surge of satisfaction through Will that pooled low in his belly. It was a quiet confirmation of the control he wielded, a reminder of the power he had to draw out Hannibal's vulnerability, to coax these moments of unguarded bliss from the man who so rarely let his guard down.

Hannibal let out a contented sigh, his eyes slipping half-closed as he soaked in the sensation. After a moment, a sly look bloomed across his features, and he tilted his head slightly to catch Will's gaze. "You know, Will," he began, his voice a silky murmur, "for someone who claims to prefer dogs, you've become remarkably adept at handling a more… sophisticated creature."

Will arched an eyebrow, the corners of his mouth twitching as he fought to keep his expression neutral. "Sophisticated, huh? Is that what we're calling it now?" His fingers paused in Hannibal's hair, just for a second, before resuming with an exaggerated slowness, deliberately teasing. He could feel the way Hannibal's body reacted to the pause, the subtle tightening of muscles that spoke of anticipation, desire.

Hannibal tilted his head slightly, maintaining his poise. "Naturally. It takes a certain skill to manage something as refined as a cat."

Will hummed thoughtfully, his fingers continuing their leisurely path through Hannibal's hair. "You know," he began, his voice laced with playful amusement, "for all that supposed sophistication, you weren't all that difficult to figure out. In fact, I'd say you were almost… predictable."

Hannibal's eyes narrowed slightly, though there was no real irritation in his gaze, only a spark of intrigue. "Predictable?" he echoed, his tone mild but with an underlying challenge.

"Mm-hmm," Will continued, a hint of smugness creeping into his voice. "I've dealt with plenty of stubborn creatures in my time, and you, Hannibal, aren't so different. Sure, you have your moments of aloofness, pretending like you're above it all, but deep down, you respond just like the rest of them."

"And how, pray tell, do I respond?" Hannibal inquired, his voice a silky murmur, though his posture tensed ever so slightly as if bracing for Will's answer.

Will smirked, the expression almost taunting. "You like to act like you're the one in control, like you're the one calling the shots. But we both know that's not entirely true, do we?" His fingers dragged slowly through Hannibal's hair, the touch calculated, both soothing and commanding, like a master taming his prized beast. The tension in Hannibal's body was visible, a coil of energy waiting to be released, and Will reveled in the knowledge that he could unwind it with just the right touch. "The moment I figured out how to handle you—what buttons to press, where to scratch—it was game over."

Hannibal's lips lifted, though there was a predatory edge to it. "Is that so? And what precisely have you figured out, Will?"

Will leaned in a fraction, his voice dropping to a low murmur that was both teasing and pointed. "That for all your cleverness, for all your schemes and manipulations, you crave the same things any creature does. Attention. Affection. A firm hand now and again." His fingers tightened slightly in Hannibal's hair, a subtle but unmistakable claim, a reminder that he knew exactly where the power lay.

Hannibal's smile deepened, but there was a flicker of something deeper in his eyes—a recognition, perhaps, of the truth in Will's words. "Is that what you think, Will? That I'm merely a creature of habit, driven by base desires?"

Will's fingers continued their slow, deliberate movements through Hannibal's hair, the silky strands slipping easily through his fingers. His touch was gentle yet possessive, each caress a quiet assertion of dominance. "I think you're a man who understands the value of control, but who also knows when to relinquish it. You've shown me that much." His gaze held Hannibal's, a subtle challenge flickering there, but also something more—an invitation to dive deeper, to explore the dynamic between them in ways that neither had dared to voice before.

Hannibal's eyes remained locked on Will's, the air between them thick with the weight of unspoken truths. "Control," Hannibal mused, his voice taking on a thoughtful edge, "is a currency, one we both know how to spend wisely." He leaned in closer, his breath warm

against Will's ear as he added, "But it's also a weapon, isn't it? One that can be turned against us if we're not careful."

Will nodded slowly, his fingers tightening slightly in Hannibal's hair. "A weapon," he echoed, his voice a murmur, "and a shield." He paused, letting the gravity of their exchange settle between them before continuing, "Control is a powerful thing, Hannibal. It's what keeps us safe, what keeps others at bay. But it's also something that others—people like Jack—are desperate to take back when they feel they've lost it."

Hannibal's eyes narrowed slightly, the playful edge in his expression giving way to a more thoughtful look. "Jack is nothing if not persistent," he agreed, his voice carrying that familiar, smooth cadence that masked the darkness beneath. "But he's also predictable. We've played this game before, Will. He'll try to dig deeper, to find something that justifies his suspicions."

Will nodded, the weight of what they were discussing settling between them. "I've bought us some time. I think I've placated him for now, but we both know that won't last. Jack's like a dog with a bone—once he's latched onto something, he won't let go until he's ripped it apart."

The image of Jack arriving with the full force of the FBI to arrest them both, to tear them apart, flashed through Will's mind like a chilling premonition. He could almost see Jack's grim expression, hear the cold command in his voice as agents stormed the house, their separation swift and brutal. The thought alone sent a spike of cold dread through him, his chest tightening with a visceral fear. He wouldn't allow it. He couldn't. The idea of being torn from Hannibal, of seeing him in chains, was unbearable.

Jack had been the man who was supposed to keep him sane, to protect his mind from the darkness that had threatened to consume him. Instead, Jack had let him fall apart, leaving him to drown in the very waters he was meant to keep him afloat in. Will resented him for that, maybe even hated him—a slow-burning anger that simmered beneath the surface, waiting for the right moment to boil over. It was that resentment, that buried rage, that made him think he could kill Jack if it came down to it.

He could envision the determination in his own eyes, the resolve to do whatever was necessary, but the act itself—a multitude of ways Will could kill Jack flit through his mind: a single, clean shot to the head, the precision of a bullet ending it all in an instant; or maybe something more brutal, a knife slipped between ribs, feeling the resistance of flesh and bone as the blade found its mark; perhaps even luring Jack into a trap, using his own instincts against him, watching as the realization of betrayal dawned in Jack's eyes just before the end came—but each scenario felt distant, hazy as if a part of him was unwilling to fully embrace that reality until it was staring him in the face.

And then, another image surfaced, unbidden but potent: the three of them sitting down to dinner in Hannibal's dining room, Leda and the Swan gazing down from above as they shared a final meal. Will imagined the tension crackling in the air, every gesture, every glance heavy with unspoken intent. He would make eye contact with Hannibal, a silent understanding passing between them. By some unspoken signal, Hannibal would hold Jack down, pinning him to the table with cold, calculated efficiency. Will could almost feel the handle of the knife in his hand, the weight of it, the way it sliced through the air with lethal

precision before sinking into Jack's neck. The blood would spurt, hot and wet, splattering across the pristine tablecloth as the life drained from Jack's eyes. The euphoric pleasure that ran through Will at that moment would be overwhelming, intoxicating. In his mind's eye, he saw himself and Hannibal standing over Jack's lifeless body, their hands slick with blood, the weight of what they had done binding them even closer together. The thrill of it, the sense of power and possession, sent a dark ripple down Will's spine.

Hannibal's fingers drummed lightly against Will's side, a contemplative gesture that hinted at the thoughts turning over in his mind. "Then we must be prepared to act when the time comes," Hannibal said, his tone calm, almost clinical, but there was an undercurrent of something else—something that mirrored the unease Will felt. "The question is, how far are you willing to go, Will? When Jack's persistence turns into a genuine threat, what will you do?"

Will's fingers twitched slightly where they rested on Hannibal's back, the subtle movement betraying the turmoil beneath his calm exterior. The warmth of Hannibal's skin seeped through the thin fabric of his shirt, grounding Will even as his mind churned. He glanced down at Hannibal, their eyes locking in a moment of shared understanding. The flicker of firelight danced in Hannibal's gaze, casting shifting shadows that mirrored the complexity of their bond. "I'll do what I have to," Will replied, his voice steady, but the words felt like they were coming from a place deeper inside him, a place he hadn't fully explored yet. His throat tightened around the admission, the rawness of his resolve settling into his bones. "I just… I can't see it clearly, not yet. But I know I won't let him take you from me. I won't let anyone do that."

Hannibal's expression softened, a flicker of understanding passing between them. He tilted his head slightly, the corner of his mouth lifting in a gesture that was almost tender, yet underscored by something darker. He nodded slowly, his fingers resuming their gentle rhythm against Will's side, each touch deliberate, grounding. "When the time comes, clarity will find you, Will. I have no doubt of that. And when it does, you'll know exactly what to do."

Will swallowed, the weight of Hannibal's assurance settling heavily in his chest as he turned his gaze back to Hannibal, their eyes locking in a moment of shared resolve. The air between them thickened, charged with the inevitability of the path they had chosen. "Jack won't give us a choice," he said, the finality in his tone leaving no room for doubt. "We'll need to take care of him, sooner rather than later. Before he finds something that puts us both at risk."

Hannibal's fingers paused for a brief moment, his gaze growing more intense as he considered Will's words. He nodded, his expression thoughtful. "You're right. Jack's persistence is a threat we can't afford to ignore." He hesitated, as if weighing his next words carefully, then continued, "It's not just Jack we have to consider, though. There are others who pose a danger to us, whether directly or indirectly."

Will's brow furrowed slightly, sensing the shift in Hannibal's tone. "What do you mean?"

Hannibal sighed softly, his fingers resuming their gentle stroking along Will's side. "Margot Verger has been… concerned about her brother, Mason. She confided in me during one of our sessions that she's noticed a shift in his behavior—something more dangerous, more erratic

than usual." He paused, his gaze searching Will's for understanding. "And I've seen it too. The way Mason looked at you during the opera, as though you were a threat to his control over Margot, was unsettling. I fear his intentions toward you are far from benign."

Will frowned, recalling the uneasy feeling he'd had under Mason's gaze, the cold, calculating look in his eyes. "So he wants me dead because I spoke to his sister?"

Hannibal's expression remained stoic, but his eyes betrayed the simmering anger beneath. "It's likely. Mason doesn't tolerate anything that he perceives as a threat to his control over Margot. And then, when he came to collect her from therapy, he made a comment—something about therapy for the whole family, insinuating that he wanted to start seeing me as well."

Will's brow furrowed in concern. "And you turned him down?"

"Of course," Hannibal replied, his voice steely. "I declined politely, but the insinuation was clear. Mason wants to be close enough to observe, to manipulate. I won't give him that opportunity—especially not when it involves you."

Will's heart skipped a beat at the intensity in Hannibal's tone, the protective edge that should have perhaps unsettled him, but instead provided a bone-deep comfort. He knew Hannibal's possessiveness well, had felt its weight before, but this was different—sharper, more deliberate, and utterly pleasing. It sent a delicious shiver down his spine, not of fear, but of something deeper, a mirrored possessiveness that he recognized in himself. The warmth that spread through him at the thought of Hannibal's fierce loyalty was undeniable, filling him with a sense of rightness. The idea of Hannibal fending off threats for him, plotting their safety with the same meticulous care he applied to everything, was not terrifying at all. It was reassuring, affirming the bond they shared—a bond that went beyond mere affection, rooted in a deep, mutual understanding of the lengths they would go to protect one another.

Hannibal's gaze softened as he noticed the flicker of emotions crossing Will's face, his fingers brushing gently along Will's side in a grounding touch. "Will," he began, his voice a soothing murmur that carried a weight of certainty, "even if Jack or Mason were to find something—anything—I've made extensive preparations to ensure our safety. We're ready to leave at a moment's notice if necessary."

Will's curiosity sparked at Hannibal's words, mingling with a sense of disbelief. He could feel the steady beat of Hannibal's heart beneath his palm, a rhythm that contrasted with the sudden quickening of his own pulse. "Preparations?" he echoed, the word rolling off his tongue with a mix of wonder and uncertainty. "What kind of preparations?"

Hannibal's eyes held a steady, reassuring gaze, his tone calm yet filled with the gravitas of someone who had planned for every possibility. "Preparations that will ensure we can vanish without a trace, should the need arise," he explained, his voice low and deliberate, as if sharing a closely guarded secret. "New identities, untraceable funds, safe havens far from the reach of anyone who might come after us."

For a moment, Will could only stare at Hannibal, a mixture of admiration and something deeper in his eyes. The depth of Hannibal's planning, the sheer foresight involved, was

staggering. It was one thing to know that Hannibal was capable of meticulous strategy, but to see the full extent of it laid out so calmly, so confidently, left Will feeling more loved than he thought possible. This wasn't just about survival; it was about the lengths Hannibal would go to ensure they stayed together, no matter the cost.

"You've thought of everything," Will said quietly, his voice laced with a kind of astonished reverence.

"Of course," Hannibal replied, his tone gentle yet firm. His fingers traced small, soothing circles against Will's side, the touch both grounding and intimate. "I've been preparing for this possibility for some time. I would never allow us to be cornered, Will. Not by Jack, not by anyone."

Will's grip on Hannibal tightened slightly, his fingers curling around the fabric of Hannibal's shirt as he processed the weight of those words. The fire crackled softly in the background, the only sound that punctuated the heavy silence between them. There was something deeply comforting in knowing that Hannibal had taken such measures, that he had thought so far ahead, all to ensure their survival. And yet, there was also a sobering realization of just how serious their situation had become, how much was at stake.

Hannibal, sensing the shift in Will's thoughts, reached up to gently brush a strand of hair away from Will's forehead, his touch tender and reassuring. His fingertips lingered, the slight pressure sending a shiver through Will's scalp, the intimacy of the gesture almost overwhelming. "We're ready, Will," he murmured, his voice a soft caress against Will's ear, each word a breath against his skin, sending a ripple of warmth through him, tightening the coil of need in his gut. "Whenever the time comes, we'll be ready."

Will looked into Hannibal's eyes, searching for any trace of doubt, but found none. The steady confidence in Hannibal's gaze was as unyielding as the man himself, a fortress of resolve that Will found himself leaning into. There was only that unwavering confidence, that unshakable belief in the path they had chosen together. The thought of leaving everything behind, of stepping into a completely new life, was daunting, but with Hannibal by his side, it was also strangely exhilarating.

"You always manage to stay one step ahead," Will said, the tension in his shoulders easing slightly as he allowed himself to relax into Hannibal's embrace.

Hannibal's smile softened, his eyes warm as he leaned in closer, his lips brushing against Will's in a gentle, lingering kiss. "And I always will," he whispered against Will's lips, the words a promise, a vow that resonated deep within them both.

They drifted off together on the couch, the warmth of the fire casting flickering shadows across the room as their breathing synced, a steady rhythm that lulled them both into a state of near-sleep. Just as Will teetered on the edge of unconsciousness, the shrill ring of his phone shattered the peaceful silence. Both men groaned in unison, Hannibal's arms tightening slightly around Will as if to ward off the intrusion.

"Rude," Hannibal mumbled, his voice thick with sleep, the word barely more than a breath against Will's neck. Will turned his head slightly, catching sight of Hannibal's softened

features, the usual sharp lines of his face blurred by the haze of drowsiness. The sight stirred something tender in Will, a rare glimpse of vulnerability that made him wish he could ignore the persistent ringing and stay in this moment forever.

But the phone kept ringing, its insistent tone dragging Will back to reality. With a resigned sigh, he reached for it, knowing that there was only one person who would call this late. He answered, bracing himself for what was to come.

“Will,” Jack barked on the other end, his voice all business, the kind of tone that brooked no argument. “We’re needed in Colorado. I hope you got a good look at the files earlier this week. A car will be there to pick you up in a couple of hours for your 4:45 a.m. flight.”

Will groaned, trying to muster some protest, but Jack was already gone, the line dead before he could even form the words. He stared at the phone for a moment, the reality of the situation settling over him like a cold, unwelcome blanket.

Hannibal, now fully awake, gave him a knowing, flat look, his eyes narrowing slightly as he considered the intrusion. “One might argue,” Hannibal began, his tone dripping with disdain, “that getting rid of Jack now would be worth the scrutiny and the subsequent need to flee. It would certainly simplify our lives.”

Will chuckled, the sound low and resigned as he pushed himself up from the couch. “You might be right,” he agreed, the weight of the impending task settling heavily on his shoulders. “But for now, I’d better go pack.”

Hannibal’s eyes followed him as he moved to gather his things, a mixture of fondness and frustration simmering beneath the surface. As Will disappeared down the hallway, the warmth of their shared moment faded, replaced by the cold reality of the world that awaited them outside. But even as the fire crackled softly in the hearth, the promise of their bond lingered in the air—a silent vow that no matter the distance or the danger, they would always find their way back to each other.

Chapter End Notes

please drop a comment letting me know what you liked!! (i thrive on validation, okay? lolol)

you can also come find me on tumblr (@graciereadshannigram)! i love getting asks from y'all <3

A Killer’s Work, A Lover’s Mark

Chapter Notes

hi hello this chapter fought me every single step of the way so please *please* be gentle with me <3

also, good news—after 13 months of unemployment, i just started a new job!! i am once again getting paid! which means also bad news—i have less time to work on this fic. HOWEVER, we're getting close to wrapping up and i am still so so so invested in this story.

that being said, instead of updating *weekly*, i will be moving to an every other week schedule. it may update sooner than that if i get some good writing days in, but i just wanna set expectations now <3

beta'd by my love EnmitiesSaddestGlare, love u bb!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The sun sat high in the sky, casting sharp, defined shadows across the barren landscape of Cherry Creek Reservoir. The light was unforgiving, bouncing off the dull, still water and creating a glare that made Will squint against the brightness. Despite the late morning hour, the warmth was disorienting, a strange contrast to the chill he’d expected from the mountains. The air was thick with the scent of drying vegetation and earth, a far cry from the biting cold and snow he’d imagined when Jack first mentioned Colorado.

Colorado isn’t supposed to feel like this, is it?

Will tugged his jacket higher, not for warmth, but to shield the tender skin on his neck from view.

Earlier, under the unforgiving fluorescent light of the airport bathrooms after deplaning, he had caught sight of the bruises—dark, blooming purples and blues etched just below his collar, the unmistakable imprint of Hannibal’s teeth and lips. The fabric pressed against the bruises, a slight, satisfying sting reminding him that Hannibal had marked him in ways that couldn’t be hidden. *At least someone knows how to leave a lasting impression.*

He shifted, feeling the cool air graze his skin, but it couldn’t compete with the warmth of memory, surging back vivid and tactile.

It hadn’t started with soft farewells or whispered promises. The moment Will had pulled out his suitcase, Hannibal had made packing near impossible, his hands everywhere—slow, deliberate, demanding. Each touch was a silent plea to stay, though Hannibal’s lips never begged. They claimed. The warmth of Hannibal’s hands lingered on Will’s skin, the sensation

so fresh it felt like Hannibal had just been there, tracing the lines of his body, mapping him out like something that belonged solely to him.

Once Will was packed, Hannibal had made actually leaving even more difficult, as if he were determined to sear himself into Will's very bones. The slow drag of his mouth against Will's skin was a promise and a warning, a reminder that no matter where Will went, he'd carry Hannibal with him. Each bruise felt like a thread, tying him back to Wolf Trap, no matter how far he went or how much he tried to focus on anything else.

The bed had been their battleground, Hannibal underneath him, his back arching into Will with a need that couldn't be mistaken for anything less than ferocious hunger. Will had fucked him into the mattress, each thrust a promise that he would come back as soon as he could. Hannibal had been relentless, his mouth latched onto Will's neck, his nails raking down Will's back, determined to leave a mark, to make sure Will would feel him long after he left.

He should have spent more time with the case files, Will could admit that much. But how could anyone expect him to focus? Hannibal made it impossible. During the briefing earlier that week, when Jack had been droning on about the Colorado case, Will's mind had been elsewhere—specifically on how to handle the little stunt Hannibal had pulled with the photograph from the opera. The case hadn't seemed worth it then, and it certainly didn't feel like it now.

He could have, of course, used the few hours between Jack's call and the car's arrival to dive deeper into the files. But reviewing case details hadn't exactly been a priority when Hannibal had taken it upon himself to remind Will, in no uncertain terms, that he didn't want to be left alone. Instead of reading through the profiles of a mediocre killer, Will had Hannibal pinned beneath him, his clothes half-packed and his resolve fully shattered by the time the car pulled up outside.

Will had boarded the plane feeling Hannibal's fingerprints still ghosting over his skin. He had skimmed the files on the plane, his eyes passing over the words without really processing them, half-heartedly trying to concentrate, but his mind was elsewhere. It kept wandering back to Wolf Trap, to Hannibal, to how difficult it had been to pry himself away from that warm, possessive embrace.

It wasn't just the physical pull of Hannibal, though that had been enough on its own—how he'd held Will, how he'd made it clear that leaving was something Will would feel for days afterward, in every mark and bruise. No, it was also the lingering thought of what Hannibal had quietly been preparing. A place for them, far from Jack, the FBI, the world they had known. Hannibal had secured their future, a haven away from it all, and Will was still processing the magnitude of it.

Hannibal being rich, it turned out, had its perks—one of many that came with dating a serial killing count. The thought had made Will smile to himself on the plane, a strange comfort in the chaos of everything else. Hannibal, always thinking ahead, always planning for the next move.

Now, standing here, the crime scene felt almost like a parody. The body was posed awkwardly against the stark trees lining the reservoir, the killer's attempt at artistry painfully obvious and just as painfully flawed. The arrangement was contrived, too deliberate in its chaos, like a scene plucked straight from the pages of a third-rate crime novel, crafted by someone who had read about horror but never truly understood it. The air was thick with the scent of pine and decaying leaves, mingling with the metallic tang of blood—a discordant symphony that fell flat, failing to evoke anything meaningful. It was as if the killer had tried to create something shocking without grasping what made true horror resonate deep within the psyche.

The faint murmur of voices reached him as Jimmy and Zeller strolled up, standing off to the side while Jack continued conversing with the local PD, likely trying to get the scene as clear as possible for Will. They waited, watching with casual ease, their chatter a distant hum against the bleak backdrop of the scene. Will's focus wavered, pulled by the interplay between the natural world and the grotesque display in front of him. The starkness of the trees, the dull water in the reservoir reflecting a pale sky, contrasted with the unnatural stiffness of the victim's body.

He shifted slightly, pulling his jacket closer around his neck, feeling the familiar pressure of the bruises hidden just beneath the collar. He knew that Jimmy had noticed, had caught a glimpse of the dark, vivid mark peeking out earlier as Will adjusted his jacket. But mercifully, Jimmy had kept his mouth shut, only offering a knowing wink. For that, Will was grateful. The last thing he needed was a conversation, especially not one where he'd have to scramble for an explanation that wouldn't raise suspicion. Those bruises, after all, spoke volumes that Will had no intention of translating for anyone else.

His phone buzzed, pulling him from the scene before him. The sounds of the reservoir and the crime scene faded momentarily as Will's focus narrowed to the screen in his hand. Grateful for the distraction, he reached into his pocket and pulled it out, flicking his thumb across the screen. Hannibal's name appeared, the text beneath it laced with sarcasm. A faint smile tugged at Will's lips as he read it, the dry possessiveness woven into every word. The familiar cadence of Hannibal's words brought a warmth that the Colorado sun couldn't provide.

[10:11am] *I trust your new playmate is keeping you adequately entertained, though I can't imagine what interest he could hold for you. Sloppy work, no doubt. Perhaps you're indulging in charity.*

Will chuckled under his breath, the petty jealousy behind the words as clear as day. Hannibal's pride was a delicate thing, as untouchable as it seemed on the surface, it could be bruised by something as simple as Will's attention straying for even a moment. The idea that Will could be captivated by anything—let alone someone as mundane as this killer—was almost laughable. But, as unnecessary and silly as Hannibal's jealousy might be, Will couldn't deny that he enjoyed it. There was something heady about being the object of Hannibal's possessiveness, knowing that the man who could control almost everything, who was a master of manipulation and restraint, unraveled just a little at the thought of losing Will's attention. It made Will feel more powerful, more claimed, all at once. And, though he would never say it out loud, it made him feel loved in a way that was uniquely theirs.

The smile still on his lips, the crime scene crept back into focus as the buzzing activity around him grew louder. Before Will could type out a response, Jack's voice cut through the crisp Colorado air like a whip, his tone as sharp and relentless as ever.

"Will, I need more! What's this guy trying to say?" Jack's posture was a study in exasperation—hands planted firmly on his hips, brows furrowed deeply as he stared at the crime scene with an intensity that bordered on irritation. Will could see it—the slight tic in Jack's jaw, the way his shoulders bunched as if waiting for Will to offer him some insight that could unravel the mess in front of them.

Will suppressed the urge to roll his eyes. Why was it always about what the killer was 'trying to say'? As if every psychopath was just waiting for the right audience to decipher their twisted messages. This one, though? This one wasn't saying much of anything.

"On it, Jack," Will responded, keeping his voice level, professional, though he really would have preferred to roll his eyes. What's there to say about a killer who fancies himself an artist but has all the creativity of a paint-by-numbers? Will's gaze swept across the crime scene, the reservoir's gentle lapping against the shore fading into the background as he took in the haphazard attempt at artistry—the victim posed against the gnarled barren trees lining the reservoir.

As he moved closer, the world began to warp, the familiar pull tugging him deeper, dragging him from his own thoughts into the killer's fractured psyche. Colors muted, as though someone had dimmed the vibrancy of the scene, and the sounds around him—Jimmy's banter, the faint rustle of leaves—blurred into nothing but a hollow murmur. It was as if he were floating into a dream, but the edges were jagged, the air too thick, the light too harsh. The world of the killer took over, reshaping Will's reality.

He let himself fall deeper, the shift in perspective like plunging into dark, murky water, the killer's twisted logic wrapping around him like a suffocating fog. The killer's thoughts bled into his own, insidious whispers crawling through his mind, invading his every thought.

I wanted to make a statement . The thought wasn't his own, but it echoed through Will's mind as if it were. The killer's voice seeped into his consciousness, a desperate whisper that clawed for significance. *People like me don't just disappear, don't just fade away. I needed to show them, to show everyone that I'm still here, that I can still do something that matters.*

Will felt the ache of that desire for importance, a gnawing emptiness that howled from the killer's mind, hollow and fragile. *I chose this place because it's open, exposed. The body needed to be seen, needed to be found quickly. No point in hiding it, no point in letting it rot away in some dark corner.*

The killer's detachment washed over Will, cold and sterile. He could almost feel the rigidness of the killer's hands as they posed the body, each movement devoid of life, the attempt to craft something "beautiful" falling flat, like a painter without vision smearing colors on a canvas. The scene had been set with care, but it was hollow. Every inch of it reeked of effort without purpose, a display meant to shock but lacking any true meaning.

I did what I had to do. The pose was important, the way the light would hit the body at sunrise. It had to be beautiful, or at least… memorable.

But even as Will slipped deeper into the killer's mind, the overwhelming sense of futility became suffocating, thick as smoke in his lungs. The killer's grasp on "artistry" was weak, a pale imitation of something greater. *I thought if I could make it look like it meant something, it would mean something. But it's just a body, just another victim in a world that's full of them.*

Hannibal flashed in Will's thoughts, unbidden. Hannibal's artistry was something else entirely. Each scene he created was deliberate, dripping with intention, steeped in layers of meaning. This killer… there was no comparison. No depth, no elegance, just a desperate cry for attention.

I wanted to be noticed, to be remembered. I needed them to see what I could do, but…

But it was all so pointless. Will almost felt offended by the mediocrity, the sheer lack of imagination. *I miss my monster* , he thought, the bitterness settling in his chest. This killer, with their clumsy attempts at artistry, was an insult to the very concept of horror.

I wanted them to see me, to see what I'm capable of. The killer's voice was fading now, the clarity of their thoughts slipping away as Will began to reel himself back into his own mind. *But all they'll see is another body. Just another body.*

The harsh buzz of his phone shattered the illusion, a sudden, jarring break from the murderous echo in his mind. It came twice in quick succession, a sharp intrusion that snapped Will out of the killer's mind completely, severing the thin thread that connected him to the pitiful thoughts of the murderer.

Will blinked, shaking off the lingering traces of the killer's psyche as he returned fully to himself. The taste of it lingered, bitter and unsatisfying, like a meal that had promised more than it delivered, leaving a stale aftertaste. His gaze flicked back to the body, a wave of disdain washing over him. This killer didn't deserve the attention they craved; they didn't even deserve to be in the same category as the one he left behind in Wolf Trap. That thought alone sent a pang of longing through him, a craving for the darkness that only Hannibal could bring—refined, complex, and maddeningly beautiful.

Glancing around to ensure Jack was preoccupied with the local PD, Will slipped his phone out, a warm flicker of satisfaction spreading through his chest as he saw another text from Hannibal. The message was brief, but the petulance beneath it was unmistakable.

[11:23am] *I find it troubling that you've been so engrossed in such mediocrity that you've forgotten me entirely.*

[11:24am] *Must I remind you where your true fascination lies? Or has the lure of the mundane stolen your attention?*

The message sent a warm ripple through Will, something in his chest purring at the neediness hidden beneath Hannibal's dramatic words. The power in being needed by Hannibal,

knowing that someone as self-assured, as untouchable as Hannibal Lecter, was so possessively tied to him–that need carried weight. Will felt it settle deep inside him, a small thrill of satisfaction at the knowledge.

And Will actually did roll his eyes at the second message. As if any other killer could fascinate him the same way Hannibal did. As if Hannibal could forget that Will had fallen in love with the Ripper long before he fell in love with Hannibal, the man. But, always the dramatics with Hannibal. It was endearing, in its own way. Sometimes Will thought Hannibal could be a little dense—so brilliant, yet somehow missing the obvious when it came to Will's devotion.

His fingers moved quickly over the screen, his response laced with the fondness he felt for Hannibal's possessive nature.

[11:27am] Sloppy indeed. Beyond mediocrity.

[11:27am] But it seems you've already assessed the situation.

[11:28am] Jealous, Hannibal?

Will hit send, a brief sense of satisfaction settling in his chest as he imagined Hannibal's response. The warmth of the exchange lingered, soothing the edge of frustration that had built up since his arrival at the crime scene, but it wasn't enough to fully dispel the cold, hollow feeling this case brought with it.

Reluctantly, Will slid his phone back into his pocket, the fleeting connection to Hannibal slipping away like the last vestiges of warmth from a dying fire. He turned back to the task at hand, but the words he needed to say to Jack felt like empty echoes in his mind, disconnected from the truth gnawing at him. How could he explain that this killer was nothing—no one, really—not worth the time or effort? They were a poor imitation of what true artistry looked like, a pale shadow of the darkness that Will had come to know so intimately. But he couldn't say that, not to Jack, who was expecting something, anything, to push the investigation forward.

Taking a slow, deliberate breath, Will steadied himself before approaching Jack, who was pacing near the edge of the crime scene, his frustration visible in the tense set of his shoulders and the tightness of his jaw. The chill in the air did nothing to cool the heat of Jack's impatience. Catching his attention with a nod, Will prepared to deliver the only insights he could muster, though they felt inadequate, hollow.

"This killer," Will began, his voice carefully measured, "they're trying to say something, but it's… disjointed. There's a lack of focus, a desperation to be seen, but without a clear message. It's like they're emulating something they don't fully understand, trying to create fear or shock without knowing what really makes those emotions resonate."

Jack's brow furrowed, his impatience bleeding through his usually stoic demeanor. "So what are we looking for, Will? A copycat? A wannabe artist? Because right now, this feels like a dead end."

Will felt the weight of Jack's expectations bearing down on him like a heavy, suffocating blanket. He resisted the urge to sigh, to let the frustration that simmered beneath the surface show. "It's more like… a novice," he said, his voice tinged with a weariness that had nothing to do with the early hour. "Someone who thinks they understand the process, but they're missing the depth, the meaning behind it. They're following a formula, but they lack the true intent. It's all surface-level."

Jack's eyes narrowed, his gaze cutting to the body like it was something personal, like the lack of meaning here was an affront to his very job. The wind picked up again, harsher this time, rustling the branches above and kicking up a thin veil of dust across the scene. It did nothing to soften Jack's voice, which came out hard and unyielding. "That's not enough, Will. We need more than just 'surface-level.' We need something actionable, something that'll lead us to this guy before he leaves another one of these scenes."

The words hit Will like stones, not because of their harshness, but because he could feel Jack's rising desperation clawing through them. Jack's impatience was almost cartoonish in how it manifested—his lips drawn tight, his fingers combing roughly through his hair, even as his boots ground into the dirt like they could somehow help him dig for answers.

Will's phone buzzed in his pocket—Hannibal. The vibrations thrummed against his thigh, low and insistent, a pull far more alluring than the drudgery of this case. His fingers twitched, almost instinctively, with the need to check the messages, but he forced himself to stay tethered to Jack's disappointment, to at least pretend his focus wasn't being drawn elsewhere. Hannibal's waiting words were a tantalizing whisper at the back of his mind, a dark promise lurking just out of reach.

"I know, Jack," Will said, infusing his voice with the kind of hollow sympathy he'd mastered long ago. It sounded weak even to his own ears—an empty echo of what Jack wanted to hear. "But this guy… he's not making it easy. There's no pattern, no deeper meaning to latch onto. It's like he's just throwing things at the wall, hoping something will stick."

Jack ran a hand through his hair again, his knuckles white, the tips of his fingers digging against his scalp. The frustration was boiling just beneath his skin now, simmering, threatening to bubble over. "We can't afford to miss anything, Will. Even if it's just a hint, I need something. Something to give the team, something to keep us moving."

Will met his gaze, the weariness of the day weighing heavily on his shoulders. He nodded, doing his best to project a kind of sympathy that felt foreign to him now, especially with Hannibal's messages scratching at the back of his thoughts. "I'll keep digging, Jack. There might be something deeper here that I haven't connected yet. I'll let you know if I find anything."

Jack's terse nod was his only response, though the displeasure lingered in the air between them like a storm cloud, heavy and dark. Without another word, he turned sharply on his heel, stalking back toward where Brian and Jimmy were still crouched over the evidence, their gloved hands moving with meticulous precision.

Will watched Jack go, the tension between them finally easing but not dissolving. His phone buzzed again in his pocket, its insistent hum like a pulse of electricity, and his fingers

twitched, eager to open Hannibal's message. As soon as Jack's back was turned, Will's hand slipped into his pocket, pulling out his phone with a practiced ease.

[11:40am] *Jealousy is such an unrefined emotion, Will.*

Hannibal would never admit to something as unrefined as jealousy—he viewed it as a base, common emotion, beneath someone of his intellect and refinement. Yet, Will could see the irony in the way it clung to Hannibal, relentless, coiled tight around him like something feral. As much as Hannibal might have scorned the emotion, it was riding him hard now, and Will could feel it tugging at the invisible thread that always seemed to connect them.

Will found it predictable, yet comforting—like a perfectly crafted melody that never failed to captivate.

[11:41am] *I'm merely concerned that your talents are being wasted on a lesser mind.*

A soft huff escaped Will, the implication of Hannibal's message settling over him like a dark, velvet cloak. Hannibal's possessiveness was always veiled behind concern, a mask so carefully constructed that it almost seemed genuine. Almost.

[11:55am] So it's not that you'd prefer I keep my mind exclusively on you?

Will's fingers hovered over the screen, his lips curling into a smirk. The playful jab was almost automatic, a conditioned response to Hannibal's carefully chosen words. For a moment, Will let himself relish the back-and-forth, the thrill of knowing Hannibal's jealousy simmered just beneath the surface. It was like holding a string, taut with tension, one he could pull at will. Hannibal's response came almost immediately.

[11:56am] *Are you accusing me of being possessive?*

Will's smile grew as he read the response, picturing the faint tilt of Hannibal's head, the way his eyes would glint with amusement at the suggestion. There was no point in accusing Hannibal of something they both knew to be true. It was a dance, this back and forth, each of them probing the other for weaknesses, for vulnerabilities. But there was safety in it too, a sense of understanding that no one else could ever provide.

[11:56am] Wouldn't dream of it, Doctor.

[11:57am] But your concern is noted.

"Hey, Will!"

His attention snapped back, the sound of Jimmy's voice cutting through the air like a stone thrown into still water, the ripples pulling Will abruptly from the seductive undercurrent of Hannibal's words. He slipped the phone back into his pocket, his expression morphing from the private warmth of moments before to the detached focus he wore like armor as he walked over to where Jimmy was crouched by the body. The sudden shift from the intimate world of his conversation with Hannibal to the grim reality of the crime scene was jarring, like being wrenched from a dream into cold, harsh daylight.

His phone buzzed with Hannibal's response before he even got all the way over to Jimmy, a subaudible vibration that sent a shiver of anticipation up his spine. He resisted the urge to check it immediately, forcing himself to focus on the task at hand.

Jimmy's voice was steady, professional, but there was an edge of uncertainty as he gestured to a small object partially hidden under the victim's arm. Will's eyes tracked the movement, his mind still half-engaged with Hannibal's words, the ghost of their conversation lingering like a half-forgotten whisper.

"What do you think this is?" Jimmy asked, his tone cautious as he pulled back the sleeve of the victim's coat to reveal a small, folded piece of paper. It was creased and worn, the edges slightly frayed from being tucked away, but the writing on it was still visible—a message, hastily scrawled, as if written in a moment of desperation

Will leaned in, his brow furrowing as he read the scrawled message. The ink had bled slightly, the letters trembling as if written by an unsteady hand, but the words themselves were chilling, a reminder of the inevitability of death. It was a quote, something literary, but the handwriting was shaky, uneven. The words themselves, though, were chilling: "In the midst of life, we are in death."

"Some kind of calling card?" Jimmy suggested, looking up at Will with a mix of curiosity and unease, his breath clouding in the cold air.

Will stared at the note, his mind turning over the possibilities. The quote was from an old funeral service, something meant to remind people of their mortality. It felt pretentious, out of place—a desperate attempt to add gravitas to an otherwise pedestrian scene. It didn't fit the rest of the crime scene—too introspective, too deliberate. It was almost as if the killer was trying to add depth to their work, to give it meaning that wasn't there.

"It's out of place," Will muttered, more to himself than to Jimmy. "Doesn't match the rest of what we're seeing here."

Jimmy nodded. "That's what I thought, too. But it's the only thing that stands out." His voice held a note of frustration, as if he too could feel the inadequacy of what they were looking at.

Will hummed in acknowledgment, already feeling the disconnect between the killer's intention and execution. The note felt like an afterthought, something tacked on to give the scene more weight, but it only highlighted the lack of true understanding behind the killer's actions. It was artless, lacking the finesse that Will had come to expect—and crave—from a true designer of death.

"Bag it and send it to the lab," Will said finally, dismissing it with a wave of his hand. "Maybe it'll tell us something. But I doubt it."

As Jimmy sealed the evidence bag, the crinkling of plastic cutting through the oppressive silence of the crime scene, Will pulled his phone out again, unable to resist any longer. His pulse quickened, the cold air biting at his fingers as he swiped open the message.

[11:59am]: *I simply find it troubling that you would allow someone else to occupy the space in your thoughts that rightfully belongs to me.*

Will scoffed, a soft huff of amusement escaping him as he imagined Hannibal's face, the sharp glint in his eyes as he typed the words. Hannibal really was one for the dramatics. He could almost hear the smooth cadence of Hannibal's voice in his head, each word dripping with possessive intent.

Will's fingers moved over the keyboard, his response coming easily, naturally.

[12:14pm] I need you to know that my eyes just rolled so far back into my head…

[12:15pm] And we both know that my allowance has nothing to do with it. Haven't you always just strolled in and taken what you want by force?

[12:15pm] What's stopping you now?

Will's gaze drifted over the scene again, taking in the disarray, the lack of intention in the killer's work. It all felt so... mundane. He glanced over at Jack, standing in the distance with the local police, and considered the possibility of leaving early, cutting loose from this uninspired charade. If he could convince Jack to let him go, he could be back in his motel room within the hour.

But just as the thought took shape, Jack's voice cut through the air, sharp and commanding, as if he had sensed Will's desire to escape. "Graham, don't even think about leaving yet! I need you here until the entire scene is processed. Just in case something else comes up."

Will barely kept in his own dramatic sigh, feeling the weight of Jack's expectations pressing down on him like a physical burden. He thought to himself that Hannibal must be rubbing off on him in more ways than he realized—the urge to roll his eyes and indulge in a bit of theatrics was strong, almost overpowering. But instead, he swallowed it down, his expression carefully neutral as he gave a terse nod of acknowledgment.

Resigned to his fate, Will wandered a short distance from the crime scene, seeking a brief reprieve from the tedium. Despite the heat of the sun, the air was still chilled in the shade, carrying with it the earthy scent of damp soil and decaying leaves. He found a spot near the edge of the reservoir, where the gravelly sand met the sparse line of trees, and settled down against a sturdy trunk. The rough bark bit into his back through his jacket, each ridge pressing uncomfortably against his spine, yet it was a welcome sensation—a reminder that he was still grounded in the present, however distasteful it might be.

Pulling his phone out, Will tapped open a puzzle game, something simple to pass the time while he waited for either Hannibal's response or for Jack to drag him back to the scene—unlikely as that was. Jack, tangled in procedural minutiae with local authorities, had left Will with little more to do than loiter on the edges. He swiped at the blocks, the game a weak distraction from the more intricate puzzles unraveling in his mind.

The soft glow of the screen faded into the background as Hannibal's latest message tugged at his thoughts. There was no mistaking it—Hannibal's jealousy, always simmering beneath the

surface, felt sharper this time, more insistent. Will almost laughed. Hannibal had grown so adept at wrapping his possessiveness in layers of eloquence, but Will had learned how to read between the lines.

It wasn't just jealousy. That familiar, biting tone was woven with something deeper, something Hannibal would never admit outright: insecurity. Buried beneath the layers of pride and control was a quiet fear of being sidelined, of losing Will's focus. Will's fingers paused. As much as Hannibal liked to appear untouchable, Will knew better. He had seen Hannibal's need for reassurance lurking beneath the cool surface.

But pushing Hannibal to admit it—to voice that jealousy—wouldn't work here. Not this time. Their earlier conversations, forcing Hannibal to use his words, had their place, but Will wasn't naive enough to think every situation called for the same approach. No, to try and get Hannibal to confess now would only drive him deeper into that defensive pride. And Will didn't want that.

Still, he couldn't deny the thrill of knowing Hannibal wanted him so badly—enough to lash out, even from miles away. Hannibal's usual confidence had its cracks, and Will found himself perversely drawn to those fragile places. But more than that, Will understood the dance they played, the way control shifted between them like tides.

He thought back to the opera, how Hannibal had reasserted his dominance when someone dared to flirt with Will. The memory brought a flicker of heat, a low, possessive hum that thrummed just under his skin. Hannibal had taken control that night, not through words, but through action. And Will had let him. It had been a mutual exchange, in the end—Hannibal taking what he needed, and Will, quietly, giving it.

Perhaps that's what Hannibal needed now: not words, but an invitation to regain control. Will's mind wandered, wondering how he might give Hannibal that power in their own way, in a space where they both enjoyed the push and pull of their dynamic. He could offer it back to him—subtly, on his terms. A small gesture, a deliberate act of surrender that Hannibal could seize upon without feeling diminished.

His phone buzzed again, dragging him from his thoughts. A familiar thrill flickered through him, a sensation that left a slow warmth spreading in his chest. **Hannibal Lecter** flashed across the screen, and Will felt a small surge of anticipation curling in his stomach. His fingers moved with unconscious swiftness, swiping the screen open. As the message unfurled, a flicker of heat settled low in his abdomen.

[12:41pm] *Force, Will? You wound me. Persuasion, maybe? Seduction? I prefer when you let me in willingly.*

Will's lips curved into a small, knowing smile. Of course, Hannibal would turn this into seduction—control disguised as an invitation. Hannibal didn't ask, not really; he maneuvered, guided, tempted. He always presented the illusion of choice, something Will had grown keenly aware of. But this time, Will wasn't interested in simply giving in.

The faint stirrings of arousal curled in his stomach, undeniable in their slow burn. Hannibal's words were laced with promise, but Will was no longer the man who fell easily into

Hannibal's orchestrations. He huffed a laugh as he typed, his fingers moving with a teasing precision.

[12:42pm] You're lucky that Jack doesn't need me right now.

The reply came almost instantly, as though Hannibal had been waiting, poised to pounce the moment Will turned his attention back to him. The image—Hannibal, eager and just a touch petulant—sent a sharp thrill through Will, the kind of excitement that bordered on dangerous.

[12:42pm] *Am I? Or perhaps I'm the unlucky one, left to my own devices... I may need to find a way to entertain myself.*

Will could practically hear Hannibal's voice, rich and smooth, wrapping around each word with precision. His mind conjured images of Hannibal, bored and restless, the kind of restlessness that led to beautifully destructive outcomes. Hannibal's "entertainment" was never innocuous. Will could imagine the trail of chaos Hannibal might leave, carefully crafted messages that only Will could decipher. The thrill of it was undeniable, but Will shook his head, suppressing a laugh. If Hannibal decided to craft a Ripper tableau while they were out of state, Will would *have* to kill Jack—there'd be no talking him down from hunting Hannibal. The thought left Will with a brief, wicked smile, but he let it fade quickly. There was no time for daydreaming here.

[12:44pm] Please don't kill anyone while I'm gone. I already have enough on my plate. That would just mean more work for me... and less time for us.

The silence stretched for a moment before his phone buzzed again, Hannibal's reply cutting into him like a knife, sharp and deliberate. Will could almost feel Hannibal's amusement vibrating through the screen, the way he'd twist Will's words, make them feel like an invitation, a lure.

[12:46pm] *But darling, then I'd get to watch that beautiful mind at work, knowing there was a worthy killer occupying your thoughts. One far more deserving of your attention.*

A pang of longing twisted in Will's chest. There it was—the possessiveness that clung to him, like smoke that was impossible to escape. Addictive. Hannibal's words always wrapped around his thoughts, pulling him in, leaving no room for anything or anyone else. Will knew exactly what Hannibal was doing, but recognizing it didn't make it any less effective.

[12:47pm] You're a menace, you know that?

He could picture Hannibal's faint smile, the flash of teeth that signaled something darker beneath the surface. The tension in Will's body shifted, a slow, deliberate response to the undercurrent of control in Hannibal's words.

[12:48pm] But you and I both know no one else can occupy the space you've carved out. You've always been inside my head. But if you're feeling left out, I'm sure you'll find a way to... remind me.

Will's fingers hovered for a moment, the thrill of letting Hannibal believe he'd won sending a quiet hum through him. It wasn't about conceding control—it was about offering it in just the right way, letting Hannibal think he was shaping the dynamic. Will was far too comfortable with his own desires now to play the unwitting pawn.

The reply was quick, the hook already set.

[12:49pm] *Perhaps I should. It's important you don't forget whose hands shaped you into what you are now.*

Hannibal's words were always more than just words—they were reminders, laden with meaning. The image of Hannibal's hands, so capable of both destruction and transformation, sent a ripple through him, a slow, possessive burn. Will could feel the shift, the way Hannibal wanted to reassert that dominance, to remind Will of the power he still held.

But Will wasn't about to surrender just yet.

[12:50pm] You can remind me all you like. Just… later.

Will pushed open the door to his motel room, the metal lock sticking slightly before giving way with a quiet click. The door swung inward, and he stepped over the threshold with the sluggishness of someone running on fumes. The case, so promising in the morning, had devolved into the kind of bureaucratic tedium he despised. A partial print. A match. And then... waiting. All day, Jack had insisted on keeping him nearby "just in case," but the truth was, Will's insight hadn't been needed at all after that first pass of the crime scene. The local PD had it wrapped up now, and yet they were still stranded here, in a town he couldn't even remember the name of, until the arrest was made.

He let the door close behind him with a soft thud, glancing around the room. It was the kind of place that blurred into every other cheap motel he'd ever stayed in. A box of forgettable beige and brown—a bed, a single chair, a worn desk pushed against the far wall. The lamp on the nightstand cast a dull, orange glow over the space, the kind of light that made everything seem older, more faded. The air was stale, carrying the faint scent of cleaning products layered over something less pleasant—sweat, cigarette smoke that had seeped into the walls, the usual. It felt suffocating, a bland reflection of the day's boredom.

Will didn't even bother with the overhead light. The room was already illuminated enough for him to find his way through its predictably uninspired layout. He tossed his jacket over the back of the lone chair and sat heavily on the edge of the bed, the springs letting out a tired creak, the only sound in the oppressive silence. His body ached—not from exertion, but from the weight of a day spent waiting for something, anything, to need him.

His shoulders throbbed with the kind of dull tension that came from doing nothing for too long. His fingers drummed lightly against the edge of the bed, a nervous energy simmering just beneath the exhaustion. His mind had been left to gnaw at the edges of the day's monotony, and it had taken all his energy not to snap at Jack or one of the techs.

He bent down, unlacing his boots with slow, deliberate motions, the repetitive action almost meditative. Each tug on the laces felt like another layer of tension unraveling, but it wasn't enough—not enough to quiet the low hum of energy thrumming in his veins.

Kicking the boots aside, he ran a hand through his hair, pulling at the curls as if the slight pressure might relieve the tension behind his eyes. It didn't. A frustrated breath slipped from his lips, filling the empty space around him with a quiet, unsatisfying exhale. The silence of the room closed in on him, but it wasn't comforting. There was something oppressive about it, like the air had grown thick with everything left unsaid. He felt boxed in, trapped in the stillness, his mind too sharp to fully give in to the exhaustion weighing down his limbs. He exhaled deeply, glancing at the whiskey bottle on the nightstand. It had been a smart decision to bring it along—an old habit, but one he wasn't quite ready to shake.

The cap twisted off with a satisfying crack, and he poured himself a generous measure into the small, nondescript glass the motel had provided. The liquid sloshed slightly as he poured, the rich amber catching the light for just a moment before settling.

He took a sip, the warmth of the whiskey spreading across his tongue and down his throat in a slow burn. The familiar heat worked its way through him, pushing back the noise in his head, quieting the restless churn of thoughts. Will let out a quiet, tired sigh as he lowered himself to the edge of the bed. The mattress creaked beneath his weight, a soft, tired groan echoing the exhaustion he felt.

The glass rested in his hands, the cool weight of it contrasting with the warmth spreading through his chest. He stared down into the liquid for a moment, watching the way it shimmered faintly under the motel's dim light. The silence pressed in around him again, but now, it felt different—more like a waiting breath than a stifling blanket. The day had been a blur of boredom and tension—waiting, watching, pretending to be useful. All the while, his mind had been elsewhere. On Hannibal.

His gaze flicked to his phone, sitting innocuously on the nightstand next to the half-empty whiskey bottle. Just the sight of it sent a jolt through him, a sharp pulse of anticipation cutting through the fatigue. It hadn't buzzed since he left the crime scene, but its silent presence was electric. Hannibal was there—just a call away. Waiting. Will could almost feel the impatience, the simmering expectation on the other end of that line, like a current threading through the air between them.

He set the glass down beside the phone, the sharp clink of glass on wood slicing through the heavy quiet. The silence that had once pressed in on him now buzzed with a different kind of energy. It was charged, thick with the weight of what was about to happen. Will's eyes lingered on the phone, knowing—without question—what came next. He knew what Hannibal wanted. More than that, he knew what Hannibal needed.

His thumb hovered over the screen, the moment stretching as he savored the control that thrummed in his veins. For just a second, he held the power between them, let it settle in his chest like a dark satisfaction. A small smile ghosted across his lips, something sharper and more dangerous flickering at the edges of his amusement. Then, with a quiet exhale, he pressed the call button.

The phone rang once—barely a beat—before the line connected. Will didn't even have time to register the silence before Hannibal's voice slipped into his ear, smooth as silk sliding over bare skin, low and possessive, curling with a hunger that hung in the charged air between them.

"Will," Hannibal's voice was a dark current, pulling Will in with a quiet, restrained intensity.

Will smirked, feeling the weight of the moment settle around him. He reached for his whiskey, already knowing Hannibal had been waiting—probably stewing in his own unique mix of impatience and veiled frustration. "Hey, darlin'," Will drawled, his voice laced with lazy amusement. He leaned back against the worn headboard, relaxing into the lumpy mattress with a casual confidence, one hand loosely cradling the glass while the other held the phone to his ear. The room felt smaller now, the distance between them shrinking in his mind as Hannibal's presence enveloped him, despite the miles between them.

"You've been wanting my attention all day, haven't you?" Will teased, the grin clear in his voice. "Begging for it, even."

He let the word linger, savoring the way it slid off his tongue, knowing full well how it would land on the other end of the line. The suggestion of begging was designed to prick at Hannibal's pride, to needle him just enough to stir the response Will was waiting for. He sipped his whiskey, the burn spreading through him in a way that mirrored the slow-building tension between them. Will leaned further into the mattress, letting the moment stretch, enjoying the taste of control.

Silence hung between them—deliberate, measured, the kind that spoke volumes in its restraint. Will could almost see Hannibal, his head tilted slightly, lips pressed into that thoughtful line, eyes narrowing with that quiet intensity that always followed when Will pushed just the right buttons. The image stirred something inside him, deepening the sense of satisfaction that simmered beneath his outward calm.

He could picture it so clearly—the slight twitch of Hannibal's jaw, the brief flicker of something dark and possessive just behind his cool composure. And then, finally, Hannibal spoke.

"I would hardly call it begging," Hannibal's voice was a velvet caress, laced with that thin thread of irritation, so carefully measured, like every word he spoke. The sharp edge beneath his smooth delivery was unmistakable, a sign that Will had landed his mark.

"Oh, no?" Will countered softly, letting the teasing note in his voice become more pronounced, knowing he was pushing further. "You sure about that, baby?"

Another beat of silence, and Will let his mind fill in the gaps—Hannibal's eyes narrowing to slits, lips curving ever so slightly into that patient, dangerous smile, the kind that always promised a reckoning. It was a look Will had seen so many times before, and each time, it sent a pulse of heat through him, anticipation flickering like a flame.

When Hannibal spoke again, his voice had dropped, thick and rich, each word dripping with the kind of intent that made Will's pulse quicken. "Begging implies a choice, Will,"

Hannibal's tone was darker now, the sharpness more pronounced. "It can hardly be called begging when it's what I'm owed."

The word *owe* lingered between them, hanging in the charged air.. It was bold, more assertive than Hannibal had been in recent weeks—since the ultimatum, since the careful re-negotiation of power between them. Will had laid down his terms, and for a while, it had felt like Hannibal had been treading lightly, testing the boundaries Will had drawn. But this? This was a shift—a subtle reclaiming of dominance, and Will found himself savoring it.

Hannibal's possessiveness had always been there, simmering beneath the surface, but this felt different. There was a new confidence in Hannibal's tone, a quiet certainty that came from knowing, finally, that Will was his. Entirely. Hannibal had always wanted Will, but now he had him, fully, and it showed in the way he spoke, the way he pushed.

And Will liked it. More than he'd care to admit out loud.

"Owe you?" he repeated softly, letting the word drip from his lips like honey, slow and deliberate. He allowed the silence to stretch for just a beat longer than necessary, teasing the tension, pulling at the invisible thread between them. Will was amused, yes, but there was power in the pause, in making Hannibal wait for what he wanted—in dangling that need just out of reach.

"Tell me," Will continued, his voice dropping to a near whisper, the edge of it teasing, intimate, "what is it I owe you, Hannibal?"

For a moment, there was only the sound of Will's slow, measured breathing, filling the space between them like the beat of a drum, amplifying the tension that hummed in the air. He could feel the shift, the heavy silence on the other end, but Will didn't mind. He leaned into it, relishing the anticipation, the delicious wait. His satisfaction deepened, imagining Hannibal on the other side—composed, undoubtedly, but beneath the surface, simmering, like a predator just before the pounce.

He could picture Hannibal now—sitting perfectly still, fingers flexing slowly in his lap, the mask of control firmly in place but beginning to fray at the edges, revealing the hunger that lay just beneath.

And then, there it was. The faintest hitch in Hannibal's breath, barely perceptible, but to Will, it was everything. That small, almost imperceptible shift told Will he had gotten under Hannibal's skin—just as he'd intended. It was like coaxing the beast to the surface, slow and careful, but inevitable. Will could almost feel the heat radiating from Hannibal's controlled exterior, the pulse of desire quickening, the need building, thickening the air between them.

Will leaned back against the headboard, his body into the soft embrace of the pillows, stretching his legs out in front of him as if he were settling in for a game. His tone was casual, playful, but it dipped low enough to carry weight, each word a slow caress.

"You sounded so… needy today," he murmured, letting the word needy roll off his tongue with just enough bite to twist the knife. The teasing lilt of his voice was a soft stroke, a calculated provocation, designed to keep Hannibal on edge.

“You wanted my attention,” Will continued, his words deliberate, slow, drawing out each syllable like a slow pull on a thread, tightening the tension between them until it was almost unbearable. “So here I am, Hannibal. All yours. Now tell me… what do you want from me?”

The internal struggle on the other end of the phone was almost audible—the hesitation, the weight of the decision Hannibal was about to make. Hannibal never liked to ask. He didn’t need to, not usually. But Will knew what Hannibal craved right now, what he was holding back. He was offering it, laying it out for him—inviting him to take, to claim, to devour what was already his. And the thought of that, of Hannibal needing him in that way, sent a warm thrill down Will’s spine, igniting something deep, something primal.

Will sank further into the pillows, letting the worn fabric cradle him. The silence on the other end of the line was like a taut string, stretched between them, waiting to be pulled tight, waiting for Hannibal to make his move. Will’s fingers drummed idly against his thigh, the anticipation simmering just beneath his skin, hot and insistent. He knew Hannibal was weighing his next words, wondering how far Will would let him go, how much control he could take before Will would push back. But what Hannibal didn’t know—or perhaps he did—was that Will had already surrendered, had already handed over the reins, eager to see how Hannibal would wield them.

His breath came slow and steady, keeping his pulse in check even as the tension coiled tighter in the space between them. He loved the way Hannibal hesitated, dancing around his need to dominate, to take control—when all along, Will had already given it freely. There was something exhilarating in that, in watching Hannibal wrestle with his desire, in seeing the cracks form in his carefully constructed control.

The seconds ticked by, but Will didn’t rush him. He savored the quiet, letting Hannibal stew in the weight of his own desire, feeling the press of the decision Will had already made for him.

And then, finally, Hannibal’s voice surged back into the silence, rich and firm, like velvet sliding over steel, the low rumble of thunder before the storm. “I want you to stop pretending you have other priorities,” Hannibal said, his tone smooth but threaded with something darker, something raw, the need barely concealed beneath the surface. It wasn’t just a command—it was a claim. The timbre of his voice carried with it the unmistakable weight of possession, the desire to pull Will’s focus back where it belonged—on him.

Will’s lips twitched into a smile at the words, his heart skipping a beat. There it was—Hannibal taking what he wanted, pulling Will into his orbit, where he always intended him to be. The subtle shift of power slid between them like a knife, sharp and precise, cutting through the tension with a delicious inevitability.

Will could picture him now, that look in his eyes, possessive and dark, the look that always made Will’s pulse quicken. That look that promised Will was his—and only his.

He knew exactly what to say. “I don’t,” he murmured, his voice low, a velvet purr that dripped with submission and something else, something softer, like a fondness wrapped in sharp edges. The statement was more than an agreement—it was a promise, a surrender wrapped in the warmth of Will’s amusement at Hannibal’s dramatics.

The power shift hit like a slow, deliberate wave, washing over Will with undeniable force. It wasn't just a change—it was a palpable presence, settling over him like a heavy cloak, pressing him deeper into submission. The moment Hannibal's voice took control, everything inside Will fell into place, each frayed edge of his thoughts smoothing out, his tension unraveling in perfect sync with Hannibal's dominance. It felt inevitable, like gravity pulling him back to where he belonged—right here, beneath Hannibal's steady hand, raw, exposed, and craving more.

Hannibal's voice bled through the phone, low and silky, coiling around Will's mind like a silken noose. "Then let me hear you say it again. Let me hear you say you're mine."

The command sent a pulse of heat straight through Will, settling low in his belly, twisting tight. His breath caught in his throat, the weight of those words anchoring him to the moment, pulling him into the intoxicating fog of submission that he could never quite escape when Hannibal spoke to him like this. He wanted this, craved it—Hannibal's control, Hannibal's ownership of him.

"Yes," Will breathed, his voice rough with need, his pulse pounding. The urgency was electric, searing through him, leaving no space for hesitation, no room for second thoughts. "I'm yours, Hannibal. I've always been yours." The confession spilled from his lips like a prayer, but there was no guilt, no shame—only that sharp, undeniable hunger that had been thrumming beneath his skin since the moment Hannibal's voice had wrapped itself around him.

He felt the heat rising, flooding through his veins, curling through his limbs, a molten ache spreading like wildfire, seeping into every part of him. His chest tightened, each breath shallow, and with it, every nerve came alive, sparking, charged with the unbearable anticipation of what was to come. The shift in power between them was tangible, sending a shiver down his spine so deep it felt like it touched his core. Hannibal's words were a vice, squeezing tight, winding around Will's body, his mind, until he trembled, breath catching, nearly undone by the sheer weight of his need.

"Good," Hannibal's voice came, smooth and decadent, curling around Will like smoke, wrapping him in a dark, intoxicating haze. He reveled in it, the pure, heady intoxication of knowing Hannibal was feeding off him, off his need, off his submission. "I want to hear more, Will. Tell me—have you missed me today? Have you thought of me while you've been away?"

Will's fingers tightened around the phone, knuckles white as he gripped it like a lifeline, his body taut with the tension thrumming through his veins. The air in the room felt thick, stifling, charged with a palpable heat that made him ache, every part of him alive with the maddening need to close the distance between them, to feel Hannibal's hands, his mouth, his presence on him.

"I've missed you," Will whispered, his voice unsteady, each word trembling with the weight of the truth. It came out raw, as if ripped from the depths of him, exposing the vulnerability he could never quite hide from Hannibal. "All day. I couldn't stop thinking about you."

Hannibal's low hum of approval was like a current, dark and consuming, surging through Will's body, setting every nerve ablaze. That sound—just a hum, just the barest breath from Hannibal—was enough to unravel him. It always was. Hannibal's control was like a drug, slipping beneath Will's skin, winding through him, and Will was too far gone to resist, too lost in the swirling depths of his need to care about anything else but the pleasure of giving in.

"And what, exactly, did you think about, Will?" Hannibal's voice was velvet, smooth but edged with a sharp command that sliced through Will's composure, drawing him deeper into the thrall. There was no escape—only the delicious ache of knowing he didn't want one.

Will swallowed hard, his pulse fluttering wildly in his throat. "I thought about last night," he whispered, his breath quickening, the memories crashing into him, heavy and visceral, filling his mind with the sensation of Hannibal's hands, his mouth, the way he claimed him, again and again.

"How you didn't want to let me go," Will breathed, his voice barely audible now, his body tightening, heat coursing through him, pooling low in his belly. He groaned, unable to hold it back, the rawness of the memory igniting him all over again. "How you made me yours."

"Go on, Will," Hannibal urged, his voice low, dark, a seductive pull that drew Will deeper, dragging him into the intoxicating haze of control. It was a voice that demanded obedience, that promised pleasure wrapped in submission. "Tell me everything."

Will's breath faltered, his chest heaving with the weight of it all. A moan escaped him, unbidden, as Hannibal's command threaded through his veins like a slow burn. His skin felt too tight, the heat from his own body nearly unbearable. "I thought about how much I wanted to stay," he managed, his voice breaking, shaking under the weight of his desire. "About how I'd rather be there with you… letting you remind me that I'm yours."

Hannibal's chuckle spilled through the phone like a slow roll of thunder, deliberate and smug, vibrating through Will's body and sending another surge of heat spiraling down into his core. The sound alone made him ache. He could picture it—Hannibal's lips curling into that satisfied smirk, knowing that Will was exactly where he wanted him. Laid bare, vulnerable, needy. Desperate for his touch.

"And now, Will?" Hannibal's voice was thick with intent, every syllable dripping with that dark, possessive hunger that Will craved. It filled the spaces between them, thickening the air, making Will's heart race faster. "Do you need me to remind you again?"

"Yes," Will whispered, his voice breaking with the sheer weight of his need. The ache inside him was almost unbearable, his skin burning with the desire to be touched, claimed, possessed. "Please, Hannibal. Remind me. I need it."

Hannibal's satisfaction was almost tangible, the power he wielded over Will like a heavy blanket, suffocating and comforting all at once. "Then you'll listen closely," Hannibal murmured, his voice a slow, seductive drawl that sent chills down Will's spine. "You'll do exactly as I say, and in return, I'll remind you of every reason you belong to me."

Will's chest rose and fell in quick, shallow breaths, his body trembling with anticipation. His mind was already spinning, slipping further into the haze of Hannibal's control. He could feel himself unraveling, every word Hannibal spoke pulling him deeper into that delicious surrender. He didn't want to stop. Didn't want to do anything but obey.

"Oh?" Will's voice was softer now, teasing, but heavy with need. His chest tightened, and he could feel the weight of each word, the way they tangled in the heat between them. "And how exactly do you plan to do that?"

Hannibal's voice unfurled through the phone like smoke, slow and deliberate, each syllable curling around Will's mind, coaxing, seducing. "Take off your shirt, Will. Slowly."

Will didn't hesitate, but there was no rush either. The anticipation swelled in the pit of his stomach, thick and pulsing as his fingers slid to the hem of his shirt. The fabric tugged over his skin, inch by inch, and he could feel the cool air kiss his exposed chest, the contrast sending a shiver through him. His nipples hardened against the coolness, his body hypersensitive, as if every nerve had been tuned to Hannibal's command. He threw the shirt to the floor, forgotten, and lay there—bare, exposed, his skin prickling with awareness, waiting for what came next.

The sensation of the air on his bare skin only heightened the vulnerability, making him acutely aware of how exposed he was, even though Hannibal was miles away. But instead of fear, it was arousal that coursed through him, a deep, pulsing heat that coiled low in his belly. Will shifted, his body sinking deeper into the bed, his back pressing into the sheets, and he let the phone rest on the pillow beside him. His smirk lingered, softened now by the weight of the moment, but still present. This was what they both wanted, what they both needed.

"Now what?" Will asked, his voice lower now, breathier, his pulse pounding in his ears as the heat between them simmered, ready to boil over.

"Run your hand down your chest," Hannibal continued, his voice low and deliberate, every word curling through the phone like a slow, unrelenting caress. "Feel the heat of your skin under your fingertips. Don't rush. I want to hear every breath, Will."

Will's breath caught, a sharp intake that sent another shiver coursing through him, his body already responding to the command before his mind had fully processed it. Hannibal's voice always did that to him—cut through the noise, the hesitation, and made him feel everything more keenly, more deeply. The simplicity of the command belied its weight—the way it sank into Will's bones, reverberating with a dark edge that sent a ripple of heat down his spine. He swallowed, throat dry, and obeyed.

His hand slid slowly up to his chest, the touch so light it was almost teasing, his fingertips grazing his collarbone before drifting lower. The pressure was barely there, but it set every nerve alight, the heat building under his skin like kindling waiting to ignite. His fingers brushed over the firm muscle, muscles twitching involuntarily beneath the delicate touch. Each graze sent a flicker of sensation rippling outward, magnified by the anticipation crackling between them, the air itself seeming to thicken.

“Good,” Hannibal purred, the sound rich and decadent, dripping with approval. It slithered through Will’s body like liquid heat, pooling low in his belly, the slow burn deepening. The way Hannibal spoke, it wasn’t just a compliment—it was a claim, and Will felt it, falling deeper into the haze of control Hannibal wielded so effortlessly over him. “Now drag your fingers lower. Slowly. I want you to feel all of yourself, like you’re feeling it for me.”

Will’s breath hitched at the intensity of the words. His hand obeyed, skimming over the taut skin of his abdomen, the sensation both too much and not enough. Each touch sent a spark of desire through him, a reminder that Hannibal was still in control, even from a distance. He dragged his fingers lower, letting the tension build, every inch of his skin hypersensitive, burning for more.

“Tell me what it feels like, Will.” Hannibal’s voice purred through the phone, a slow hum vibrating with purpose, rich and thick as velvet against Will’s skin. “Tell me how your skin reacts to your touch. I want to hear how much you need this.”

Breath stuttering, his body tightened, the command wrapping around him like a chokehold. He could feel himself slipping further the heat that enveloped him, every stroke of his fingers a fresh surge of arousal that spiraled out of control. “It’s… it’s hot,” Will breathed, his voice rough, barely more than a rasp. His other hand clutched the sheets, knuckles white, grounding himself against the overwhelming need that was clawing its way up from his core. “It’s like… I can feel you. Even though you’re not here. It’s like you’re touching me.”

Hannibal’s voice dipped lower, each word seeping with satisfaction, slow and luxuriant, like warm liquid running over Will’s senses. “That’s right, Will. Because even now, you’re mine. You’ve always been mine. Keep going—lower.”

Will’s hand obeyed, moving lower as Hannibal instructed, the heat growing unbearable, his fingers ghosting over his stomach, teasing the waistband of his jeans. The fabric felt like a barrier, constricting against the heat burning beneath his skin, his cock straining against the tight denim and aching for more.

“Undo your jeans,” Hannibal ordered, the command sharp, slicing through the haze of arousal that had settled over Will’s mind like a blade. His voice was low, deliberate, the kind of voice that demanded obedience without effort. “But don’t touch yourself. Not yet. You wait for me.”

Will’s fingers fumbled briefly with the button, the trembling in his hands betraying his restraint. His breath caught, uneven, the air around him thickening with the tension curling tight in his chest. The simple task of unzipping his jeans became a deliberate, drawn-out act, each sound loud in the stillness of the room, every tug on the zipper a tease that only amplified the heat simmering inside him. He could feel the weight of his need pressing hard against the fabric, aching for release, but he obeyed—his desire to follow Hannibal’s command stronger than the urge to give in to his own impulses.

“You’re doing so well, Will,” Hannibal’s voice hummed through the phone, rich and thick with approval. “Now,” Hannibal continued, the smooth cadence of his voice sending shivers down Will’s spine, “push them off. All the way off.”

Will's pulse quickened, his hands shaking as he hooked his thumbs into the waistband and shoved the jeans down in one swift motion, kicking them and his boxers to the floor. The cool air hit his exposed skin, goosebumps erupting as his cock strained, standing painfully hard against his stomach. His chest heaved with uneven breaths, every second of waiting pushing him closer to the edge.

"Place your hand just above your cock," Hannibal's voice was a gentle command now, deliberate and slow, "Feel the heat. But don't touch yourself yet. You don't get that until I say so."

Will's hand hovered just above, the heat radiating from his skin so intense it was nearly unbearable. The ache between what he craved and what he was allowed had grown into a living thing, gnawing at him, begging for release. His body had become hypersensitive, every nerve wound tight, thrumming with a need that coiled deep in his gut. The space between his hand and his cock was a deliberate, wicked torment, each millimeter a cruel stretch of agony that made his entire body hum with frustrated desire. It was the kind of exquisite pain only Hannibal could orchestrate, the sharp line between pleasure and torture so perfectly balanced.

"Can you feel it, Will?" Hannibal's voice oozed through the phone like molten silk, rich and dark, each syllable soaked in possessive heat that left Will breathless. "How much you want it? How much you need me to tell you what to do? Tell me, Will—what does it feel like to be on the edge, knowing you can't have it until I let you?"

Will's chest tightened, his breath catching in his throat. The air around him felt thick, oppressive, his pulse hammering in his ears, syncing perfectly with the steady rhythm of Hannibal's words. His arousal had sharpened into an agonizing, throbbing ache that pulsed through his body in waves, the intensity nearly too much to bear. His entire being seemed to vibrate in response to Hannibal's control, like a finely-tuned instrument waiting to be played.

"It feels…" The words tore from Will's throat, broken, ragged, laced with a desperation he couldn't hide. His hand hovered just above his aching cock, so close that the heat radiating from his own skin was unbearable. Every fiber of his being screamed for release, his body trembling with the sheer need to touch, to relieve the pressure building inside him. But he didn't. Not yet. The temptation to disobey, to let his fingers twitch, just enough to brush against himself, was overwhelming. Relief was so close—so tempting, like a cool rush of water just out of reach in the desert. But Will wanted to be good. Good for his Hannibal.

He held himself still, the tension in his muscles so tight it felt like they might snap. His cock throbbed painfully, twitching in time with his pulse, the air between his skin and his hand thick, suffocating, his hand burning for Hannibal's permission. He squeezed his eyes shut, the sound of his own heavy breathing filling the room, echoing through the small, empty motel space. "It feels like you," Will groaned, the words tumbling out in a rush, his voice trembling, unhinged, desperate.

It was maddening. The empty space between his hand and his cock was a torment he could barely stand, the ghost of Hannibal's touch in every breath, in every pulse of blood beneath his skin. He could feel Hannibal everywhere, the weight of the man's command wrapping tight around him, cutting off his thoughts, his self-control. "Like you're right here," he

gasped, his chest heaving with the effort of restraint, every nerve alight with the raw electricity of need. “Touching me. Controlling me. Owning me.”

Hannibal’s hum vibrated through the phone, slow and deep, sending a fresh surge of heat coursing through Will’s veins. It was a sound that dripped with ownership. “That’s right, Will.” Hannibal’s voice dropped, dark and thick with lust. “Imagine my hands. My fingers, tracing your skin. You’re mine, and you’ll only touch yourself when I allow it.”

Will’s hand trembled, hovering above his throbbing cock, every second dragging out the sweet torment. His breath came in ragged, shallow gasps, each one filling his lungs with fire. The pulse of his own need was unbearable now, an ache that refused to be ignored. But the pain had his head swimming, intertwined with the pleasure of Hannibal’s control, and Will sank deeper into it, giving himself over to the fantasy of Hannibal’s hands replacing his own, Hannibal’s presence enveloping him completely.

“Now, Will,” Hannibal’s voice cut through the heavy air like silk slicing through skin, a sharp, commanding presence that slipped inside Will’s mind, dragging him deeper into submission. It wasn’t just words—it was a hand around his throat, tightening with every breath, pulling him under. “Slide your hand down. Slowly. Wrap your fingers around yourself, but don’t move. I want you to feel what I do to you.”

Will obeyed instantly, his fingers trembling as they closed around his cock, the heat of his skin almost scalding against his palm. A moan ripped out of his chest, his throat tightening as the weight of Hannibal’s command settled deep in his chest. The weight of his arousal, thick and throbbing, pulsed under his grip, but it wasn’t just his touch— it was Hannibal’s, the sensation of being controlled, possessed, as if Hannibal’s hand was guiding his every movement, controlling every flicker of pleasure that coursed through his veins. The leash between them felt taut, every heartbeat another pull, binding him tighter, drawing him in.

The urge to stroke, to seek relief, surged up inside him, nearly unbearable in its intensity. His fingers twitched, aching to move, to bring himself closer, but he held still, the weight of Hannibal’s presence wrapping around him like a vice. He knew stroking without permission would be empty, wouldn’t carry the same weight. He needed it to be Hannibal—Hannibal’s approval, Hannibal’s control.

“Good,” Hannibal purred, his voice thick with arousal, every syllable dripping with satisfaction. The approval surged through Will like molten heat, slipping beneath his skin, feeding the fire already burning there. His breath hitched, body shuddering as the sensation soaked into his veins, making his skin prickle with anticipation. He could hear it now—the slight catch in Hannibal’s breath, that subtle, uncharacteristic crack in his control. It was faint, but it was there, and it sent a rush of something sharp and electric through Will’s body.

Hannibal was slipping, unraveling in ways only Will could see. The hunger, always carefully concealed beneath that calm exterior, bled through his words, and Will could feel it, could feel the raw need vibrating through their connection, the undercurrent of Hannibal’s want pressing into him like a pulse, thick and heavy. It mirrored Will’s own desire, feeding off of it, doubling it. The intensity of Hannibal’s need struck him, and Will whimpered—soft, breathy, unable to contain it—because hearing how much Hannibal wanted him, craved him, was like a visceral jolt to his system.

Hannibal groaned, low and rough, the sound slipping free from him in a way that was almost guttural, a noise so raw that it vibrated through the phone. It was like a current passed between them, that groan triggered by Will's whimper, and it sent a shock of electricity surging through Will's core. His hand tightened instinctively, gripping his cock harder, as if trying to anchor himself, his body trembling under the weight of the sound. The sensation was sharp, overwhelming, like being pulled tighter and tighter into a knot of heat that he couldn't escape from, and the pleasure grew too intense, too sharp, hovering on the edge of something that threatened to undo him completely.

"Now, start moving your hand. Slowly," Hannibal commanded, composure regained and his voice rich with intent. "I want you to take your time, Will. I want to hear every sound you make, every breath. Let me know exactly how good it feels."

Will's hand moved with agonizing slowness, each stroke dragging over his skin like fire, the taut flesh of his cock thrumming under the weight of his own touch. He squeezed his eyes shut, a low gasp escaping as the tension coiled tighter, every muscle in his body straining, the need to go faster gnawing at him like a ravenous beast. But he held back, his body trembling with restraint, each slow drag of his hand a surrender, a submission, a gift to Hannibal.

"You feel me, don't you, Will?" Hannibal's voice slid through the haze, low and possessive, each word wrapping around Will like a chain, pulling him tighter, tethering him to the dark promise woven into the sound of his voice. "My hands, my breath on your skin. I'm with you, inside you. You've always been mine. Every part of you. And you're never leaving."

The raw command in Hannibal's voice made Will shudder, eyes snapping open once more as the certainty behind it sent jolts of pleasure through him like a whip. Hannibal wasn't just speaking to him; he was branding him with his words. The air felt heavier, thick with desire, the heat curling through Will's body so intense it bordered on unbearable.

"I'm yours," Will rasped, his voice hoarse, the words breaking from him like a confession, a surrender wrapped in the undeniable truth. The tension inside him coiled tighter, a knot of pure want growing in his belly, his hand trembling as it slid over his cock in slow, agonizing strokes. Every muscle in his body strained against the restraint, the need to chase the high almost unbearable. But Hannibal held him fast, a leash Will wore willingly, the weight of his control sinking deeper into his flesh.

Hannibal's growl rumbled through the phone, dark and primal, the sound vibrating through Will like a shockwave, making his pulse stutter and his body tighten in response. "Good. Now faster, Will. Show me how much you need this. Show me what it feels like to belong to me."

Will's hand sped up, the slick heat of his palm sliding over himself, and the room around him blurred as his senses narrowed to the sensation and Hannibal's voice. He could almost feel Hannibal there with him, pressing into him, mouth hovering just above his ear. The phantom weight of Hannibal's body felt real, pinning him, controlling him.

"Imagine me there," Hannibal continued, his voice dripping with predatory hunger. "Imagine my teeth in your skin, marking you again. You'd like that, wouldn't you, Will? Knowing that every bruise, every bite, reminds you that you're mine."

Will's hips bucked into his own hand as the words painted vivid images in his mind—Hannibal above him, pressing him down, claiming him with teeth and hands. His hand moved faster, the pleasure winding tighter, like a wire stretched to its limit, ready to snap.

"Hannibal…" Will's voice was a broken moan, his body trembling with the force of his need. The room felt too hot, his skin too tight, everything too much, but not enough at the same time. He was close, so close, the edge of release just within reach, but he didn't dare take it. Not without Hannibal's permission.

"You're close, aren't you?" Hannibal's voice was low, dangerous, like the crackle of a fire about to consume everything in its path. "I can hear it, Will. The way your breath catches, the way your body trembles for me. But you don't get to come yet. Not until I say so. You wait for me."

Every muscle in Will's body tightened, a coil wound so tightly it threatened to snap. His hand still moved, slow, torturous, dragging his control to its breaking point. The need for release throbbed painfully inside him, a fire licking through his veins with every stroke, but Hannibal's voice held him in place, an iron grip he couldn't escape. His breath came in sharp, ragged gasps, each one a plea on the edge of a whimper, but he stayed obedient, the desperation to please gnawing at his insides. He needed to prove it, needed to be good—to show Hannibal he could be everything he wanted, everything he needed.

"Baby…" Will's voice cracked, his entire body trembling with the effort of holding back. Every nerve was alive, screaming for release, but the denial turned that need into a razor-sharp edge, slicing through him. "Please, Hannibal, let me—"

"No." Hannibal's voice came swift and sharp, a growl laced with authority. The word hit like a blade, slicing through Will's need, making him groan, his body shaking violently at the force of it. The denial sent a wave of heat crashing through him, his cock throbbing painfully in his hand as his body rebelled against the command.

Hannibal's voice was a leash, yanking him back with brutal precision. "You don't get to come until I say so. You're mine, Will. Every part of you. I want to hear you beg for it."

The words hit Will like a punch, knocking the air from his lungs. The control he clung to by a thread snapped, sending him spiraling into raw, aching submission. The need to obey—no, the need to be owned—flooded him, drowning out everything else. A shiver of pleasure ripped through him, the denial only making it sharper, more intense.

"Please," Will gasped, his voice barely more than a broken sob. His body shook, his hand slick against his cock, each stroke a cruel tease that twisted the pleasure into a weapon turned against him. His chest rose and fell in rapid, erratic breaths, the torment of holding back making every touch feel like fire under his skin.

"Please, Hannibal, let me—"

"No." The word snapped through the line again, cutting clean through Will's desperation. Hannibal's tone was smooth, the kind of cold authority that could bend anyone to his will. It reverberated through Will's body, making his entire body jerk violently at the force of it. The

denial sent a fresh wave of heat surging through him, twisting the already unbearable pleasure into something darker, something sharper. A guttural groan tore from Will's chest, a sound he couldn't control.

"Words, Will," Hannibal growled, his voice thick with possession.

The command shattered the last vestiges of Will's resistance, breaking him open completely. His control, fragile and desperately held, crumbled, leaving him bare and trembling under the weight of his submission.

"Please," Will gasped, the word raw and wrecked, falling from his lips like a prayer. "Please, Hannibal, I need it, I need you—" His hand shook, faltering, his body quivering as he clung to the last thread of control Hannibal allowed him. "I can't—" His voice broke, the ache of denial tearing through him, a visceral, twisting agony that felt like it was going to rip him apart. "Please, Hannibal, I'll do anything, just—just let me come, please, let me—"

The words spilled from his mouth in a frantic rush, his mind unraveling, the need clawing at him like an animal. "I need it, I need to come, I need to feel you—please, Hannibal, please —" His body shook violently, his cock pulsing in his hand, the desperate need for release winding tighter around him, choking him with every gasping breath. The pleasure was so intense, so raw, that it felt like it would tear him apart from the inside out.

"Please, I'll be good, I'll be so good, Hannibal, just—just let me—"

Hannibal's chuckle rippled through the phone, dark and decadent, sliding across Will's skin like a slow burn. The sound alone sent a fresh wave of arousal crashing through him, his cock twitching in response, throbbing under his grip.

"That's it, Will," Hannibal's voice was a low, wicked drawl, a dark purr that slid through Will like liquid heat. "Look at you, begging so beautifully for me. So desperate. So needy. You'd do anything, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," Will breathed, his voice wrecked, nearly incoherent with the need tearing through him. The words were a surrender, a complete unraveling at Hannibal's feet. "Anything, Hannibal, anything for you—just please—please, I can't—" The rest of his words dissolved into a low, broken moan, his body shuddering with the sheer force of denial, every muscle screaming for release. Every nerve was on fire, burning under the weight of his need.

"Good boy," Hannibal purred, his voice dripping with dark approval, each word stroking the raw hunger that had taken over Will's every sense. "You beg so beautifully for me, Will. You're mine, completely, aren't you? My obedient, desperate Will." His tone was a low, commanding growl, possessive and deliberate, each word a heavy chain around Will's neck, tightening with every syllable.

"You've earned it. You can come now, Will. Come for me."

The permission was like a trigger, a detonator in Will's mind. The second the words left Hannibal's lips, Will's entire body shattered with the force of his release. Pleasure ripped through him like a tidal wave, an explosion of heat that seized every muscle, every nerve, and

held him in its brutal grip. His vision whited out, his world narrowing to nothing but the overwhelming intensity of his orgasm. His hand moved frantically, chasing the release Hannibal had gifted him, his cock throbbing in his grasp as wave after wave of ecstasy coursed through him, tearing him apart and putting him back together all at once.

The heat spread, molten and all-consuming, from his core outward—each pulse of pleasure rolling through him like fire, setting every nerve aflame. His breath came in ragged, uneven gasps, his body quaking with the intensity of it all, his mind lost in the dizzying, visceral sensation of fully letting go. Will felt like he was drowning in the release, sinking deeper and deeper into the tide of bliss, his muscles tensing and releasing as the pleasure ebbed through him. The tightness in his chest loosened, leaving him trembling, floating on the remnants of the moment.

A sound tore from his throat—half a moan, half a broken cry—hoarse and wrecked from the force of his own need. His hips bucked, his body acting on instinct, chasing the last remnants of sensation as it rippled through him, his hand still clenched around himself in the aftermath. It was overwhelming, the pleasure endless in its reach, dragging him down into that inescapable space where nothing else existed but the sound of his own breathing and the echo of Hannibal's voice, ever present, ever commanding.

As the final waves subsided, leaving him trembling and utterly drained, Will collapsed back onto the bed. His body felt boneless, every muscle heavy in the most satisfying way, as though all the tension had been wrung out of him. His chest heaved with uneven breaths, the dampness of sweat cooling against his skin, while his pulse continued its erratic dance beneath the surface. The room seemed to close in around him, the air thick with the intoxicating scent of sex and the lingering heat of his release, enveloping him in an almost claustrophobic haze.

His body was humming, ever nerve hypersensitive to the faintest shift in the air, the afterglow wrapping around him like a cocoon—warm, grounding, but leaving him with the sensation that the world had tilted slightly off its axis.

"That was—" Will began, his voice hoarse, gravelly from the intensity of the moment. He fumbled for words, trying to articulate something more profound, but the weight of it all left him speechless, his thoughts muddled. "I hope it was as good for you as it was for me," he finally managed, settling for something simpler, his chest still rising and falling with ragged breaths.

A low chuckle rumbled through the phone, deep and satisfied, sending an unexpected shiver down Will's spine despite the warmth still pulsing through his body. Hannibal's laughter always had that effect on him—rich, dangerous, and undeniably possessive.

"So absorbed in your own release," Hannibal's voice dripped with playful amusement, each word precise, as if savoring the power of it, "that you missed mine entirely. You were too far gone, Will." The dryness of the remark didn't hide the undercurrent of fondness woven through it, a quiet pride in how thoroughly Will had been undone.

Will's lips twitched into a tired smile, a contented hum escaping him as he let his eyes flutter shut, imagining the look on Hannibal's face—calm, composed, but with that barely concealed

satisfaction glinting in his eyes. The thought of Hannibal climaxing at the same time as him sent a fleeting jolt of arousal through his body, his cock giving a weak, involuntary twitch. But the sensation was muted, dulled by the exhaustion that weighed him down, leaving only the slow, lazy satisfaction that lingered in the aftermath. “Guess I’ll have to pay better attention next time,” he murmured, his voice tinged with a tired sort of amusement, his body too spent to react further. “But I’d be lying if I said that wasn’t worth it.”

A hum of agreement came from Hannibal’s end, rich and full of pride, laced with a tenderness that felt like a caress through the phone. “It was,” Hannibal said, his tone softening, but with a certain gravity to his words, a shared understanding that wrapped around them both like a quiet vow. “You did well, Will. Always so good for me.”

The praise settled over Will like a blanket, warmth unfurling deep in his chest. He basked in it for a long moment, letting it seep into his bones, each word reaching further, stirring something both peaceful and possessive in him. A comfortable silence fell between them—not awkward or strained, but something warmer, something tethered and quiet. It was the kind of silence that spoke of connection, a silence that didn’t need to be filled, because it was already brimming with the weight of everything they shared.

Will could almost feel Hannibal’s gaze through the phone, that intense, unwavering presence that always grounded him in moments like this. It was as though, despite the distance, Hannibal was still there with him, watching over him, claiming him all over again with that same quiet, possessive intensity that Will craved.

“I’ve missed you today,” Hannibal said after a moment, his voice quieter now in a way that felt like an intimacy all its own. “More than I care to admit.”

The softness in Hannibal’s voice did something to Will. His chest tightened at the words, warmth spreading through him like a slow bloom, until it reached the very edges of his exhausted limbs.

“I missed you too,” Will murmured, his voice low, lazy with the afterglow and the comfort of Hannibal’s presence lingering even now. He shifted slightly on the bed, feeling the pull of fatigue in his muscles as he sank deeper into the mattress. “And if things go well tomorrow, I’ll be back by mid-afternoon. Knock on wood.”

He paused, letting the words hang there, the ‘if’ in his statement heavy with the reality of what ‘going well’ entailed. It meant the police actually pulling their weight, making an arrest, and Jack confirming that the Behavioral Science Unit wasn’t needed anymore.

“So, here’s hoping they don’t need us to babysit longer than necessary.” There was a hint of exasperation, not just with the case, but with the long hours spent apart, the tediousness of this killer compared to what he really wanted—to be home, to be with Hannibal.

Hannibal’s response was smooth, reassuring, as though he could sense the tension in Will’s voice. “I’ll be here at home waiting for you, Will,” he murmured, the words laced with quiet confidence. “The dogs have been behaving themselves in your absence, though I suspect they’ll be even happier to see you than I will.” A rare smile touched Hannibal’s tone, almost playful. “Buster has been particularly… energetic today. I think he misses you.”

Hannibal's response came smoothly, a quiet reassurance threaded through his words, as though he could sense the tension in Will's voice. "I'll be here at home waiting for you, Will," he murmured, the words slipping from his lips with such natural ease, the quiet confidence in them like a balm. "The dogs have been behaving themselves in your absence, though I suspect they'll be even happier to see you than I will." A rare smile danced at the edge of Hannibal's tone, almost playful. "Buster has been particularly… energetic today. I think he misses you."

But Will barely registered the rest. He was caught—stopped cold—by one word, a word so simple, yet so deeply intimate that it sent a shock of warmth through him. Home.

Not "your home." Just home.

The shift was subtle, but it hit Will like a tidal wave, the realization sinking deep into his chest. Hannibal wasn't just talking about Wolf Trap. It wasn't about the physical space. No—Hannibal had called it home because of Will. Because for Hannibal, home wasn't a place anymore; it was a feeling. A person. It was them.

Home was wherever they were together. It wasn't the walls or the familiar surroundings—it was the quiet intimacy that had woven between them, the unspoken promise of always. The word settled in Will like a warm, steady weight, filling something that had always felt empty. Something he hadn't even realized he was missing until Hannibal, with his careful, deliberate nature, let that word slip so easily, so naturally.

He wanted to say something, to acknowledge it, to tell Hannibal what it meant—how much it meant. How that one small shift had cracked something open inside him, something deeper, more vulnerable than he'd ever let himself feel. But Hannibal continued speaking, recounting some small anecdote about Buster's antics earlier in the day—something about a stolen glove and a chase through the yard.

Will listened, but only half-heartedly, his mind still wrapped around that singular thought. Home.

It was so simple, so ordinary, and yet it carried with it an intimacy that left Will breathless. Instead of pushing, instead of trying to put words to the overwhelming feeling that swelled inside him, Will let it wash over him. He let the warmth of it spread, filling the cold spaces left by the day's emptiness, by the long hours spent away. It was like the lingering heat of a fire, comforting, steady, something to hold onto.

This moment—this word—it didn't need to be said again. It didn't need to be explained. It was an understanding between them, something that transcended words.

"Good," Will finally said, his voice softer now, laced with something more—something heavier, more tender. The weight of everything he wanted to say hovered just beneath the surface. "I'll be there as soon as I can. And then…" He paused, letting the warmth of his smile spread into his words. "Then you can remind me, properly, just how much I belong to you."

A low hum of approval came through the phone, the sound deep, warm, like a caress that made Will's breath catch. "I look forward to it," Hannibal purred, his voice laced with the promise of everything waiting for them both when Will returned. "Rest well tonight, Will. You'll need it."

Will chuckled under his breath, the exhaustion of the day finally catching up with him, but now softened by the warmth blooming in his chest. His eyes were already starting to close, the weight of Hannibal's words still wrapped around him like a blanket. He'd have to clean himself up at some point, but not now. "Goodnight, Hannibal," he whispered, the words carrying more weight than they should, layered with the quiet understanding that hung between them.

"Goodnight, my love," Hannibal replied, his voice a tender caress, the possessiveness now tempered with affection—something deeper, something that had taken root and grown between them. "I'll see you soon."

As the call ended, Will let the phone slip from his hand, the warmth of Hannibal's words still settling over him like a protective layer. He lay back, letting the stillness of the room wash over him, his thoughts drifting not to the case, not to the tedious hours ahead, but to the promise of tomorrow. Soon. He would be home soon, back where he belonged—where they both belonged.

Chapter End Notes

i still have mixed feelings about this chapter, but i hope you enjoyed!! please drop a comment if you liked, they always make my day :)

feel free to come yell with me on tumblr (@graciereadshannigram), i really do love hearing from y'all and my asks are always open!

Threatened

Chapter Notes

hello my loves!! this chapter is a little on the shorter side because it didn't make sense to cut it anywhere else, but i think you'll still enjoy. the next one will likely be extra long to make up for it!! <3

beta'd by my loves EnmitiesSaddestGlare and Jay_Is_A_Rat, y'all are my favs!! any remaining mistakes are 100% my own.

xoxox,
Grace

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will shifted uncomfortably in his seat, feeling the press of exhaustion settle into his bones. The plane, far past the point of tolerable, had become a suffocating capsule of stale air and frayed nerves. They were on the ground, wheels firmly on the pavement at Dulles, but trapped—held hostage by an unavailable gate. The plane wasn't moving, and neither was anyone else. They should have landed hours ago—mid-afternoon, with time to unwind before the evening—but after a two-hour delay leaving Denver and now more than an hour sitting uselessly on the tarmac, the clock had ticked beyond six.

It all seemed to pile on top of one another—each hour that passed, every irritation stacking like bricks, the weight of the day pressing down. It had started long before he even stepped onto the plane, the fatigue creeping in at the airport. They'd arrived long before dawn had even considered breaking the horizon, bleary-eyed and irritable. The team's collective frustration had been almost palpable, a low hum of displeasure that no one had the energy to properly express. Will could still remember the stale scent of bad coffee clinging to the air, the sterile lighting of the airport casting everyone in a sallow shade of yellow as they sat in plastic chairs, listening to the first of many announcements about their delayed flight.

Something about weather. Will had tuned most of it out. He didn't care where the storm was or why it was affecting their plane. All he cared about was getting through the day so he could go home. He had watched the others shift uncomfortably in their seats, Zeller rubbing his temples like the delay was a personal insult, Jimmy scrolling endlessly on his phone to distract himself. Jack had been characteristically calm, but there was an undercurrent of impatience even in him, visible in the way he checked his watch every few minutes as if willing time itself to move faster.

And then, when they'd finally boarded the plane, just when Will thought they were done with the waiting, the turbulence had hit.

Spring storms. They had caught him off guard—sudden and violent, appearing out of nowhere, shaking the plane with a force that rattled the windows and sent drink carts sliding in the aisles. The plane had bucked hard, and for a moment, Will had felt his stomach lurch as the ground seemed to drop out from under them. He had gripped the armrests tighter, his knuckles white against the pale plastic, and though he hadn't been a particularly anxious flier, that kind of turbulence wasn't something anyone could ignore. Each dip and roll reverberated through him, amplifying the exhaustion that had already settled deep in his bones.

The sound of rattling overhead compartments and muttered curses from passengers had rippled through the cabin, but it was the constant, unpredictable jolts that had worn Will down the most. The subtle tension that had been simmering in him for hours flared up, his nerves already frayed from the relentless delays and the oppressive press of bodies around him. Now, each violent shake felt like it was unraveling him further.

Beside him, Zeller had been a wreck. Will hadn't needed to look at him to know—the man's anxiety radiated off him like heat, filling the small space between them. The way Zeller's shallow breaths had come fast and uneven, the near-constant fidgeting as his hands clamped down on the armrests so tightly that Will had half-expected him to rip them off entirely. Zeller's panic clung to the air, like the scent of ozone before a storm, pressing into Will's already overwrought senses.

Another jolt, sharper that time, had sent the plane lurching to the side. Will's grip had tightened instinctively, the muscles in his forearms tensing as he fought the rising discomfort inside him. He hadn't been afraid—not exactly—but the erratic movement of the plane had only added to the grinding discomfort that had been growing since they'd first boarded. Every shake, every dip, had worn at him, a relentless assault on his already depleted patience.

He had closed his eyes, trying to shut it all out, but there had been no escape from the chaos. The turbulence, Zeller's shallow breathing, the faint groans of passengers—it had all seeped into his consciousness, relentless and inescapable. Even after the rough air had passed and the plane finally stopped shaking, the tension in the cabin refused to dissipate. It hung over everyone like a thick fog, settling into the very walls, as if the frustration had become a part of the plane itself.

And now, even though they were grounded, the frustration was festering, with nowhere to go. Will turned his gaze to the window, where the last hints of daylight clung stubbornly to the horizon, the fading orange light casting long shadows on the wing. What should have been a peaceful view felt mocking—just another reminder of time slipping away. Will clenched his jaw, muscles tightening with a familiar impatience. His fingers twitched, itching to move, to leave, to escape the endless confinement.

He closed his eyes again, hoping to block it all out, but the proximity to other people—Zeller on his right, Jimmy across the aisle—was unbearable. His skin felt tight, pulled thin over his raw nerves, as if one more word, one more sound, might set him off. Not that it was their fault, exactly. His body ached from hours of being trapped in place, and as he shifted to ease the discomfort, the movement only made things worse. His muscles protested, stiff and unyielding. Each breath felt like the air was growing thicker, the cabin shrinking around him. The press of too many people, too much energy, was like a weight pressing on his chest.

“I swear, we’re gonna be stuck here forever,” Zeller’s voice broke through Will’s haze, frustration sharp in his tone. “Why even land us if there’s no gate? I’d rather be up in the air than sitting in this metal box.”

Will opened his eyes, the dim cabin coming back into focus.

“Relax, Zeller,” Jimmy said from across the aisle, his tone far too casual for the situation. “It’s not like they’re going to keep us here forever. We’ll get off soon enough.”

Zeller huffed, shifting uncomfortably in his seat. “Easy for you to say. You weren’t the one gripping the armrests back when we were getting tossed around like clothes in a dryer.”

Another impatient sound from Zeller, but Will barely registered it. He was too busy trying to keep his own rising irritation in check. Zeller’s constant fidgeting, the way his restlessness vibrated into the small space between them, was like sandpaper against Will’s already raw nerves. His skin prickled again, as though the walls of the cabin were closing in, and for a moment, he thought about just walking off the plane, gate or no gate.

He fumbled for his phone, more out of habit than anything else. Hannibal had been receiving updates from him all day, every reply a calm, steady reassurance cutting through the chaos, like an anchor in the storm. Hannibal never pushed, never pried. He didn’t need to. Will typed the next message almost automatically, his fingers seeking the small comfort of connection.

[6:27pm]: We’ve landed, but can’t get to the gate, so they’re not letting us off yet.

[6:27pm]: Hopefully home soon.

And home—it wasn’t just a place anymore. It was Hannibal, waiting for him with that impossible calm, like the eye of a storm. The thought of it felt both comforting and unsettling at once. Of course, that calm would probably be disrupted the moment a dog stole something or Hannibal decided dinner needed more meticulous preparation.

He hit send and stared at the screen, as though the response itself might smooth out the tension coiling tighter in his chest with every passing second. When the phone buzzed, it was simple: a heart emoji. Will blinked at it, exhaling through his nose, feeling an irrational pang of longing. A heart? Really? Hannibal—perfect, controlled Hannibal—reduced to something so small and so ordinary. Still, that tiny symbol, that single beat of affection, unraveled something deep in Will, if only for a moment.

Hannibal only resorted to emoji responses when he was otherwise occupied. It was a curious quirk—Hannibal, who always chose his words with surgical precision, reducing himself to a simple heart when distracted. Will almost smirked. The great Hannibal Lecter, surgeon of language, now a millennial at heart. Will could almost picture it: Hannibal’s attention elsewhere, hands full with something more pressing, but still finding a moment to send that small, affectionate signal.

He thought about Buster’s latest bout of mischief and wondered if the dog had gotten into more trouble. It wouldn’t have been a surprise. The day before, Buster had somehow

managed to make off with one of Hannibal's gloves—one of those fine leather pairs Hannibal kept in pristine condition. The dog had darted out the back door, tail wagging triumphantly, the glove clamped between his teeth like a prized trophy. Will could see it all in his mind: Hannibal, standing in the kitchen, immaculately dressed, his expression barely concealing his exasperation as he followed the dog outside at a measured pace. A glove, of course. Buster always had a flair for drama.

Hannibal, in a suit, chasing down the dog like an irritated parent. The image was ridiculous, but Will could picture it vividly. Hannibal, who could silence a room full of people with just a look, rendered powerless by a dog who seemed to take perverse joy in defying him. Buster probably saw the whole thing as an epic game. The dog, blissfully indifferent to Hannibal's authority, bounding across the yard with the glove dangling from his mouth, tail wagging like a metronome. Hannibal had tried reason first—calm, clipped commands that might have worked on anyone else. But not Buster. Will could almost hear the dry amusement in Hannibal's voice when he later recounted the incident. Even Hannibal's patience had limits, apparently.

Or maybe Hannibal was in the kitchen, sleeves rolled up with precise care, preparing something elaborate for dinner. The image shifted in Will's mind, and now he could see Hannibal moving with his usual grace, every action purposeful as he handled the ingredients he had carefully selected. Something needlessly intricate, no doubt, because Hannibal never did anything halfway.

But truthfully, Will hoped Buster was giving Hannibal more trouble tonight. It wasn't that he took pleasure in Hannibal's rare moments of frustration—it was that it made Hannibal human, vulnerable in a way that Will rarely saw. Flustered, but still trying to maintain that dignified calm. For all of Hannibal's precision and control, there was something oddly endearing about the way he could be thrown off balance by a misbehaving dog.

Even so, Hannibal had always treated Will's dogs with an almost reverent affection, something that never failed to surprise Will. Despite Hannibal's cool detachment from the rest of the world, there was something different when it came to the dogs. Will had seen the way Hannibal would watch over them when they slept, his hand resting on their heads with unexpected tenderness. Hannibal didn't squander trust—not even with the dogs.

It wasn't just in the way he touched them. Will had overheard Hannibal talking to the dogs before, quiet murmurs in that smooth, measured tone. The words themselves didn't matter—it was the warmth in his voice. Hannibal spoke as though the dogs could understand every word, and maybe they could. There was a softness in Hannibal's voice when he talked to them, an ease that Will rarely heard elsewhere.

It was a side of Hannibal most people wouldn't believe existed—a softer edge to that sharp intellect. And it was Will's. There was something selfishly satisfying in knowing that no one else got to witness Hannibal like this. The version that dropped the mask, that talked quietly to dogs and let himself be just a little less perfect. A secret. One that belonged to Will and the dogs. Everyone else could have the sharp-suited, razor-edged Hannibal. This was Will's version, and he wasn't about to share.

A violent sneeze from somewhere a few rows behind sliced through Will's fragile calm, shattering his thoughts like glass. The image of Hannibal and the dogs dissolved instantly, leaving behind the raw edges of overstimulation that Will had been fighting to ignore. Everything surged back at once—the low hum of the engines, the dry, recycled air scratching at his throat, the endless press of bodies around him. It felt like the entire cabin was closing in, a thousand irritations piling on top of each other, pressing down from all sides. His jaw clenched, muscles in his neck and shoulders tightening painfully, and for a brief, dangerous moment, he wanted nothing more than to turn around and snap at the person who had disturbed his reverie. Not that it would help, but it felt like the only outlet he had. He knew it wouldn't fix anything. But the weight of that intrusion, the constant reminder of how trapped he was in this metal box with people—people he couldn't escape—was almost unbearable.

It wasn't their fault, not really. This was just part of being around people, and Will had never been good at that.

He had to admit, the more time he'd spent with Hannibal, the more his tolerance for everything and everyone else seemed to have evaporated.

It had been a slow burn, at first—a subtle shift he barely noticed. But now, trapped in a pressurized cabin with strangers, their emotions buzzing around him like static, it felt almost unbearable. It was as if someone had cranked the emotional dial to eleven and left it there. The tension was so thick it felt like it clung to the very air, heavy and stifling. Pretty much everyone was exhausted, most were quietly simmering with irritation, and some—like Zeller—were practically radiating anxiety like a neon sign. It wasn't just the way people sighed heavily or shifted in their seats every few minutes; it was in the way the atmosphere seemed to buzz with collective impatience. Will was trying to block it all out, trying to close off that part of him that absorbed the emotional energy of everyone around him, but it was getting harder. Much harder.

Will exhaled slowly, forcing the tension from his shoulders, though it did little to ease the fatigue gnawing at his bones. The thought of home was the only thing keeping him tethered to any sense of calm now. He pictured the familiar warmth of his living room, the soft padding of his dogs' paws on the wooden floor, and Hannibal—waiting for him, calm and collected as always. That quiet intensity that hung around him, like a storm just beyond the horizon. Hannibal, who never seemed rattled or restless like everyone else on this plane, who never let the world press in on him the way it did with Will.

But instead of being home, he was still stuck here, surrounded by bodies and buzzing thoughts, waiting. The only movement came from the minutes slowly dragging by, stretching out as if the plane was suspended in time. Waiting for the weight of exhaustion to finally drag him under.

Finally, the crackle of the pilot's voice broke through the thick tension of the cabin, announcing they were approaching the gate. A collective sigh of relief rippled through the passengers, like a release valve had finally been opened. A few people clapped, and Will's jaw tightened, a familiar surge of irritation prickling beneath his skin. He could almost hear Hannibal's voice in his head, dry and amused: *Clapping, really?* The thought made Will's

lips twitch, but it did little to soften the growing discomfort gnawing at him. It didn't make being trapped feel any less suffocating.

Jack reached across the aisle, patting Will's shoulder in what was clearly meant to be a comforting gesture. "We're almost off the plane, Will. Just hang in there a little longer."

Will fought the urge to shrug off Jack's hand. Physical reassurance wasn't what he needed—not from anyone but Hannibal. He nodded stiffly, offering no real response, his body tensing under Jack's touch. The last thing he wanted right now was someone trying to ease his discomfort when the only real solution was getting off this damned plane.

Finally, the doors opened. The whoosh of fresh air that swept through the cabin as the pressure equalized felt like the first real breath Will had taken in hours. He was grateful they were seated near the front; as he rose from his seat, grabbing his bag from the overhead compartment, he silently thanked whatever forces governed the universe that he wouldn't have to wait long to escape this claustrophobic hell.

As he stepped into the aisle, moving forward with the slow shuffle of passengers heading for the exit, the cool night air waiting just beyond the door felt like salvation. Will didn't care about the others anymore. He didn't care about the awkward goodbyes or the tired smiles exchanged between colleagues. All he cared about was getting out of here, away from the noise and the exhaustion, away from everything that wasn't Hannibal and the quiet promise of home.

The moment his foot touched the jet bridge, he felt the air shift—the temperature dropping just enough to remind him that he was finally, finally free of the plane. All he had to do now was make it home.

Will stepped out of the jet bridge and into the terminal, blinking under the harsh fluorescent lights that illuminated the sprawling corridors. The chaos of the airport buzzed around him—voices, announcements, the rhythmic roll of suitcases over tile. It felt distant, as if happening underwater. He trailed behind Jack, Zeller, and Jimmy, his mind already slipping away from them, from the frenetic energy they carried.

As he walked through the terminal, blinking against the harsh fluorescent lights, something inside him stirred. It was the familiar pull—the magnetism that always tugged him back to Hannibal—but tonight, it felt sharper, almost urgent. The chaos of the airport buzzed around him, but Will's mind was already slipping ahead, reaching for the quiet of home, for the presence that had become its center.

Zeller and Jimmy were still bantering, their voices cutting through the din with a familiar, teasing cadence. Will tuned it out, his attention narrowing to the path ahead, the exit that would take him one step closer to home. He barely registered the people moving around him, the families, the couples, the tired business travelers. They were all blurs in his periphery. He didn't care about any of them, not now. All he wanted was to be outside, to feel the cold night air against his skin and to breathe something other than recycled air.

His phone buzzed softly in his pocket. For a split second, hope flickered—Hannibal, perhaps? But it was just a travel update from the airline, useless information about luggage.

Will silenced the notification and shoved his phone back into his coat. Hannibal was waiting for him, not here, not in this chaos, but at home, where the world narrowed down to something manageable, something that felt like it made sense.

He'd told Hannibal not to bother picking him up after they'd gotten delayed for hours. At the time, it had seemed logical. He didn't want Hannibal wasting the evening sitting in the airport parking lot, waiting for a flight that could've been delayed even longer. But now, as he followed the others toward the Bureau-assigned cars waiting for them outside, he regretted that decision. Hannibal had offered, of course, and Will had politely declined, certain he'd made the right call. But the ache in his chest told him otherwise. Hannibal should have been here. He should've been the one waiting for him at the curb, a calm, quiet presence that would have made all of this bearable.

At least his house wasn't far from Dulles. The drive would be short—mercifully so.

They reached the exit, the automatic doors hissing open as the cool night air washed over them. Will took in a deep breath, feeling the sharp chill bite at his face. It was a welcome sensation, a small reprieve from the stuffy confines of the plane and the terminal. The line of black sedans was waiting for them, engines idling quietly, their drivers standing at attention, ready to whisk them away to wherever the Bureau had arranged.

Jack, always the leader, moved ahead, turning to address the team with some closing comment. "Good work, everyone," he said, his voice full of forced cheer, the kind of tone meant to uplift after a long day. "Get some rest. We'll debrief tomorrow."

Will barely registered the words. His mind was already racing ahead, skipping over the pleasantries, over Jack's well-meaning but hollow encouragement. He couldn't bring himself to care about the work, about the cases, about anything the day had thrown at them. There was only one thing on his mind now, and it was Hannibal—waiting for him, a steady beacon of quiet amidst the chaos that had followed him all day.

The driver assigned to him stepped forward, opening the door to the sleek black sedan. Will nodded in acknowledgment, his movements automatic, mechanical. He climbed into the back seat, feeling the slight dip of the cushioned leather under him as the door clicked shut with a soft finality. He exhaled slowly, sinking into the silence of the car as the engine hummed beneath him. Finally, a moment of solitude.

But the anxiety didn't leave him. It clung to him, winding tight around his chest like a knot that wouldn't unravel. The quiet should've been calming, a balm after the noise and the waiting, but it wasn't enough. Not yet. He closed his eyes, hoping the absence of sound, of people, would offer some relief, but it didn't. The tension stayed with him, thrumming just beneath his skin, an uneasy pulse that reminded him that this—being here, being alone in this car—wasn't what he needed.

What he needed was Hannibal.

The thought of him, of the man who had somehow become the anchor in Will's otherwise chaotic existence, loomed larger in his mind. He imagined Hannibal at home now, probably in the kitchen, the soft light of the stove casting a warm glow over his sharp features. Maybe

he was preparing dinner, the aroma of some perfectly executed dish filling the air, or maybe he was sitting by the fire with one of the dogs at his feet, waiting for Will with that same calm patience he always seemed to possess.

The distance between them felt unbearable. Will could already feel his fingers twitching, his body restless with the need to get home, to close the gap between them. He could feel the weight of Hannibal's absence more acutely than he expected, like a tangible thing pressing into his chest.

The driver glanced at him in the rearview mirror, probably noting Will's silence, his brooding expression, but thankfully said nothing. The car slipped out of the airport and onto the quiet roads, the lights of the city flickering past in a blur. It was a short drive, but it still felt too long, each passing minute adding to the growing tension coiled inside him. He stared out the window, watching the trees and the distant glow of houses sweep by, but his mind was already home, already inside, already with Hannibal.

The closer they got, the more the car seemed to shrink around him. The air was too thick, the space too tight, and he needed out. Needed to feel the cold air on his skin again, needed to be away from this confinement. The familiar streets of Wolf Trap began to appear, and Will's pulse quickened. Almost there.

His fingers itched for something—anything—to distract him from the claustrophobic tension winding tighter in his chest. He pulled his phone from his pocket, the screen lighting up in the dim car, casting a faint glow over his hands. No messages. Will frowned, swiping through his notifications just to be sure. Nothing. Hannibal hadn't texted. He had been expecting something—a message, maybe a single word or some wryly crafted sentence letting Will know that he was waiting. But the silence on his screen only deepened the restlessness gnawing at him.

He exhaled sharply through his nose, thumb hovering over the keyboard. Maybe Hannibal assumed Will didn't need the reassurance. Maybe he thought the anticipation was enough. It wasn't. Not right now. Will quickly tapped out a message:

[7:18pm]: Almost there, can't wait to see you.

He hit send, staring at the screen for a beat longer than necessary before locking the phone and shoving it back into his pocket. No immediate response, and the empty quiet of the car pressed down on him once more.

The driveway came into view, long and winding, leading toward home. For a moment, he debated just staying in the car—letting it take him those last few minutes, getting to Hannibal a little faster. But he might explode if he stayed in the car any longer. He could feel the walls closing in, the weight of it making his skin itch. Hannibal could wait a few more minutes. What Will needed right now was out.

He leaned forward, tapping the driver's shoulder lightly. "You can drop me off here," he said, his voice low but firm, surprising himself with the urgency. The driver glanced back in the rearview mirror, unsure, but Will waved it off. "End of the driveway is fine. I need the walk."

The sedan slowed to a smooth stop, the headlights casting long shadows over the gravel at the end of Will's long, winding driveway. The driver hesitated only for a second before unlocking the doors with a quiet click. Will stepped out into the evening air, letting the cool breeze wrap around him as he closed the door behind him. The car pulled away slowly, its taillights fading into the distance as it disappeared down the road, leaving Will standing in the darkness. Alone. Finally.

The silence here was different—natural, calming. Immediately, a sense of ease settled over him, seeping into his bones as the tension he'd carried all day began to loosen. He could hear the soft crunch of gravel underfoot as he started walking, his shoes leaving faint impressions in the damp earth. The night was crisp, the air carrying the fresh scent of budding trees and damp soil, rich and earthy. It was early spring, and the world around him felt alive—wet leaves clung to the ground, while the scent of pine and rain-soaked wood filled the air, grounding him in a way the sterile confines of the plane and car never could.

Each breath in felt like a small reprieve, the tight knot of anxiety slowly unraveling from his chest with every step forward. The openness of the outdoors—the familiar, wild smell of the earth, the cool air touching his skin—was like shedding a second skin. The road ahead stretched out, dimly lit by the moon above, and the gravel path seemed to stretch on forever. But the walk felt good—necessary, even. It was as if the physical act of moving forward was pulling him out of the tight knot of anxiety that had wound him so tight all day.

His thoughts, though, remained stubbornly focused on one thing: Hannibal.

It was almost *embarrassing* , the way his chest tightened at the mere thought of seeing him again—how much he'd missed him in the not-even-forty-eight hours they'd been apart. For a moment, a small smile tugged at the corners of his lips, more self-aware than anything. For someone like Will—who had always cherished solitude, thrived in it, even—this pull towards another person was disorienting. Maybe one day it would settle into something resembling normalcy. Maybe. But the truth was, he didn't just want to see Hannibal; he needed to. It was a physical ache, an odd, growing weight in his chest that seemed to expand with every hour. He tried to ignore it, but there it was—constant, gnawing. He had never felt so tethered to someone, so... dependent.

Even now, it took him by surprise, how natural it felt to think of Hannibal as part of his home. Not just the physical space—the house, the dogs, the familiar creak of the floorboards—but Hannibal. The quiet way he filled a room, the steady calm he brought with him. It was unnerving sometimes, how much Will had come to rely on that presence. He hadn't realized it fully until it was gone—until the last two days of silence had felt less like the peace he was used to and more like something important was missing. Like *he* was missing something vital. Damn if he could put a name to it, but whatever it was, it was inescapable. That presence, that warmth, was what made this place more than just a refuge. It made it feel like he was returning to something he hadn't known he needed until now.

Will shoved his hands into the pockets of his coat, the cool leather of his gloves brushing against his fingers as he walked. The soft rustle of leaves in the breeze, the distant hoot of an owl, the rhythmic crunch of gravel beneath his feet—it all settled around him, slowly

quieting his mind, dragging him out of the swirling thoughts and grounding him, whether he liked it or not.

Ahead, the familiar outline of his house came into view, and the sight made his heart beat just a little faster. It was absurd, really, the way anticipation curled in his chest. The porch light was on, casting a warm glow across the front yard, and through the windows, the soft light of the living room spilled out into the night. The glow from the kitchen was visible too, a golden warmth that called to him, pulling him forward like a beacon.

This wasn't just home—it was Hannibal, waiting for him. And, of course, that thought alone sent a flush of warmth through him, like a switch being flipped. His pulse quickened, and Will couldn't help but feel the faint, involuntary spark of excitement.

He could almost picture him there, inside, moving through the kitchen with his usual grace, everything perfectly in place. Hannibal had a way of making even the most mundane tasks seem like they were part of some grand design. He could be plating dinner with his meticulous precision, or maybe he was sitting in the living room with a book in hand, perfectly composed, waiting for Will to return. The image filled Will with a calm he hadn't realized he needed. It didn't matter what Hannibal was doing—just knowing he was there, waiting, sent a flicker of warmth through Will, an anticipation that bordered on annoying in its intensity.

As he got closer, the scent of damp earth mixed with the faintest hint of woodsmoke from a distant chimney, and Will found himself wondering what Hannibal had made for dinner. Something elaborate, no doubt. Even after all this time, Hannibal never failed to surprise him with how meticulously he planned every meal. Will remembered the way Hannibal had once teased him about it, saying that knowing the menu ahead of time would spoil the surprise.

Will's lips twitched into a small smile at the memory. Hannibal was right, of course. He always was. There was something thrilling about the not knowing—about coming home and being surprised, about letting Hannibal take control of something so simple as dinner. It was a small thing, but it had become something Will had come to look forward to. A quiet ritual between them.

The glow from the windows grew brighter as Will neared the porch, the warmth of it seeping into him before he even reached the door.

Home. Hannibal.

But as he drew closer, a flicker of unease began to creep in, an almost imperceptible shift in his gut. Will's eyes locked onto the door. Everything should have felt right, like stepping back into a familiar rhythm, but the uneasiness still gnawed at the edges of his mind, tickling at his subconscious like a faint whisper he couldn't quite make out.

Will frowned, his feet coming to an automatic halt, his entire body stilling as if his mind was trying to catch up with the sensation crawling across his skin.

Something wasn't right.

The uneasiness clung to him, sinking deep into his bones. The warmth that had filled him a moment ago began to ebb, replaced by something sharper, colder. His mind rejected it at first—he was so close to Hannibal, to the safety and familiarity of home, yet the knot of anxiety in his chest only tightened. It was an almost primal sense, instinctual, the way his nerves began to hum with tension, sharpening his awareness like the edge of a finely honed blade. Will's breath slowed, and his fingers twitched at his sides. The air around him, so familiar a moment ago, felt different now—thicker, more oppressive, like the very atmosphere had shifted.

His eyes scanned the yard, his gaze sweeping over the long shadows stretching across the lawn. The night, once a welcome balm, had grown unnaturally still. The silence that had been comforting now felt heavy, pressing in on him. The rustling of the trees in the soft breeze had always been a comfort, but now it felt hollow, devoid of the usual quiet calm. Every nerve in his body tingled as the back of his neck prickled with unease.

His instincts flared, warning him, prodding him to be alert. That warmth, that excitement that had burned so brightly inside him was now overtaken by something darker. Will could feel the pull—his body almost twitching toward his phone, the urge to call Hannibal a whisper in the back of his mind. But Hannibal was just inside. He knew that. He could feel Hannibal's presence through the walls, could imagine him moving with that same deliberate grace, calm and collected. But the certainty didn't settle him. That same gnawing unease wouldn't let him rest.

Something was off.

Will's breath hitched as he fought to keep the flood of anxiety from overwhelming him. His gaze darted across the yard, scanning the perimeter of the property, but everything seemed normal. Too normal. The trees swayed gently, casting shifting shadows that danced with the movement of the wind. The porch light flickered ever so slightly, illuminating the yard in a soft glow. It all looked exactly as it should, but Will's instincts—those sharpened, animal instincts that had never failed him—were screaming for him to look harder, to listen deeper.

The soft rustling of the leaves was the only sound in the air, the night otherwise still, too quiet. And then—movement.

Will froze, muscles tensing, as something shot out from the bushes to his left. His breath caught in his throat, heart lurching in his chest. A blur of fur and motion, moving fast—too fast. Will's eyes snapped to the figure emerging from the darkness, every muscle in his body on high alert, ready to react.

Winston.

The dog bolted from the shadows, his usual bounding energy replaced by something frantic, desperate. Will's heart sank, the knot in his chest tightening until it was hard to breathe. Winston was never outside alone—never without Will, Hannibal, or the other dogs. He was always safe inside the house, where he belonged. But now, he was outside—alone.

Something was wrong. The air prickled with a threat Will couldn't yet see, but his body felt it—felt it in the way Winston moved, panicked and wild. Will's body moved on its own,

stepping forward instinctively, eyes narrowing as they tracked the dog's every movement. Winston's ears were flat against his head, his tail tucked tightly between his legs as he whined —a low, keening sound that made Will's blood run cold. It was a sound he knew all too well. Fear. Panic.

Winston didn't approach him, didn't bound forward with the usual enthusiasm. Instead, he hovered near the edge of the porch, pacing in a tight, anxious loop, his body language frantic, unsure. The dog was broadcasting distress, loud and clear.

Will's gaze sharpened, his mind snapping into a state of hyperawareness. The world around him slowed, his focus narrowing to razor-thin precision. Every detail came into sharp relief: the soft rustle of the leaves, the subtle flicker of the porch light, the way Winston's paws scuffed the dirt in his nervous pacing. The scent of the yard, damp earth, and something musky hung in the air, mixing with the metallic tinge of distant blood. His heartbeat thundered in his ears, his pulse a steady rhythm, matching the growing dread creeping up his spine.

Winston was alone. But where were the others? Will's eyes flicked toward the far edge of the yard, where the shadows hung heavier. His breath hitched as he spotted them—huddled near the tree line, barely visible in the dark. Buster, Zoe, Sasha, and the others— all his dogs were crouched low, hidden in the safety of the underbrush. Their eyes glinted in the faint light, wide with the same fear coursing through Winston.

A sliver of relief pierced through Will's tension. They were safe. Terrified, but safe. Yet that relief was fleeting, overshadowed by the question that twisted like a knife in his gut: why were they outside?

His breath quickened, the cold night air burning in his lungs as his mind raced to make sense of the scene. What had happened inside the house? What had sent them all fleeing into the night? Why was Winston out here, so agitated, so panicked? His eyes scanned the yard again, seeking out any threat, any hint of danger lurking in the shadows. But everything was still— eerily, unsettlingly still.

"Winston," Will called softly, his voice low, controlled, but the dog didn't come. He didn't even react to his name. Instead, Winston whined again, sharper this time, his head snapping back toward the door, his body stiffening with some instinctive fear. Whatever had spooked him was inside.

Will's gut twisted, the knot of anxiety unfurling into something far more urgent—far more dangerous. His instincts were screaming now, every nerve in his body telling him to act, to move, to find out what was happening inside that house. Where was Hannibal?

Winston's whine cut through the stillness again, and Will's pulse spiked, a cold sweat breaking out across the back of his neck. He knew that sound. It was the sound of a dog sensing something terribly wrong, something lurking just beyond sight, something out of his control. Will's vision sharpened, his senses honing in on every flicker of movement, every shift in the shadows as his mind spun through every possibility, every potential danger.

His body moved before his mind could catch up, instinct taking over as he stepped forward, scanning the perimeter of the yard, searching for any sign of intrusion. His eyes darted from corner to corner, scanning the familiar terrain for anything that felt... out of place. The air felt thick with something invisible, something malignant. Was it an intruder? Something more sinister?

Will's breath hitched as the adrenaline kicked in, his thoughts becoming clearer, more focused. His body was tense, his muscles coiled and ready for action. He felt his hand instinctively move to his side, fingers twitching for the familiar grip of his FBI-issue gun. But instead, a darker impulse rose within him—he didn't want the gun. He wanted something more immediate, more personal. His fists, his teeth—anything to tear into whatever had driven his dogs out and threatened what was his.

His eyes flicked back to Winston, who had now stopped pacing, his body frozen in place, staring at the door as if it were the source of all his fear. The other dogs crouched further into the underbrush, their forms barely visible, but Will knew they wouldn't come out until it was safe. His pack was smart—they trusted him. The dog's wide, frightened eyes seemed to lock onto the entrance, and Will's heart sank further. Whatever had spooked Winston was still inside.

Will crouched low, eyes never leaving Winston, his hand making a sharp, urgent gesture toward the brush. "Go," he whispered, barely audible, but his tone was laced with an authority Winston had learned to obey. For a moment, the dog hesitated, trembling as if torn between staying by Will's side and fleeing the fear that gripped him. But then, mercifully, Winston responded. His body sank closer to the ground, tail tucked tightly against him, and he backed away, paws making only the faintest crunch as he disappeared into the cover of the nearby bushes, swallowed by the shadows.

Will watched Winston vanish, his gaze lingering on where the rest of his dogs were hidden. They remained crouched, silent, watching him. Waiting for his signal. His pack trusted him, trusted he would protect them, as he always had. That knowledge steadied him, just enough. But the cold, gnawing fear remained. Something had torn through his home and sent them all scattering—and now it was his turn to face it.

Will exhaled, his breath steady but tinged with tension. Winston was safe now, out of harm's way. The rest was up to him.

Without another thought, his feet moved, his body propelled by an instinct far older, far more primal than logic. The shift was automatic, the change in his posture subtle but definitive—muscles coiled, his weight shifting forward, steps quiet, calculated. He was no longer Will Graham, the man who analyzed the darkness, who lived at the periphery of violence. Now, he was the predator, slipping into the role as naturally as breathing.

The space between him and the door evaporated as he closed the distance in swift, silent strides, every nerve alive and alert. His breath came shallow, controlled, the tension in his chest focused, not anxious. This wasn't the time for fear. It was the time to act. He could feel the deep, visceral need to protect what was his, to find the danger lurking in his home and end it.

Each step was silent, his senses stretching out like tendrils, trying to capture the faintest sounds, the subtlest shifts in the air. His fingers twitched, ready for anything. The need to protect, to find out what had gone wrong, burned through him like fire, sharpening his every sense, guiding him with a single-minded intensity.

Will moved up the porch, his body sinking into an almost predatory rhythm. The weight of the night pressed down on him, but it wasn't the stillness that unsettled him—it was the absence of anything else. His mind sharpened, instincts roaring to life as every nerve hummed with the need to act, to protect, to find.

The door was closed, but as he reached for the handle, his fingers brushed against the smooth metal, and it gave way easily. Unlocked.

The unease in his chest tightened, but it wasn't panic—it was focus, a sharpening of intent that settled into his bones. He didn't shove the door open; he nudged it carefully, cautiously, listening. Straining. Anything, any sound. His ears reached out, but the house felt empty, hollow in the way it sometimes did in dreams when you're walking through a place you should know but nothing is as it should be.

Will paused, standing just outside the threshold, his fingers clenching around the doorknob as his eyes flicked around the yard again, taking in the smallest details—the way the wind stirred the trees, the faint rustle of leaves underfoot. He inhaled deeply, wishing for a moment that he had Hannibal's sense of smell, something to give his mind more information, more data to process. What would Hannibal have smelled? Blood? Fear? Someone else's scent? The thought flared hot and fast through Will's mind, but he swallowed it down, his breath steadying as he pushed the door open further.

It creaked quietly on its hinges, the sound sharp in the still night. Will slid inside, the weight of the door heavy as he closed it silently behind him. His boots made the softest thud against the wooden floor, and as soon as the door clicked shut, his senses sharpened further. Every shift in the house magnified. He felt it. He was inside now, part of the house, part of the danger.

The lights were still on, casting an eerie warmth over the familiar space, but the comfort it usually brought was gone, snuffed out by the sharpness of the destruction laid out before him.

His living room was torn apart.

Cushions slashed, furniture overturned, books scattered like fallen leaves across the floor. The soft light from the lamps seemed to mock the violence, making the wreckage look almost casual, like a child's tantrum. But Will could see the malice in it—the purposeful violence, the intent.

He took slow, controlled breaths that steadied him, each inhale anchoring him in the present, each exhale sharpening his focus. The chaos before him wasn't shocking, not anymore. His mind locked into that instinctual place, where things stopped being confusing or overwhelming and started making sense. Hannibal. He needed to find Hannibal. He needed to protect him. Nothing else mattered. His heartbeat settled into a determined rhythm, each beat a countdown. The world narrowed to that singular need, that visceral urge.

His senses heightened as the cold fury settled deep into his veins, calming him even as his pulse thrummed with readiness. Every hair on the back of his neck stood on end, a low thrum vibrating beneath his skin. The air itself seemed to thicken around him, every inch of his skin hyper-aware, tingling with awareness. The room came into sharper focus, every object, every disturbance etched in his mind like a map. The faint scent of leather from his jacket, the bitterness of sweat—all of it part of the picture now. His muscles coiled, body alert, waiting for the next move. Someone had come into his home, his space, had threatened what was his.

And they were likely still here.

Letting loose a low growl, Will turned, eyes flicking toward the kitchen. A low groan echoed from the walls, faint, but unmistakable. More of the wreckage stretched into view—chairs overturned, the table slightly askew, as if something—or someone—had been dragged across it. He could see a glint of something on the floor, shattered glass maybe, and the faint, metallic scent of blood tickled the edges of his senses.

Copper, thick and clinging to the back of his throat.

He paused, his breath stilling, eyes narrowing. There was a shift in the air—small, subtle, but unmistakable. A presence, close. Too close. The fine hairs on his arms prickled, his ears picking up the almost imperceptible sound of a breath not his own. The predator in him stirred, pushing him forward. Find. Protect. His breathing was steady, deep, the familiar rush of adrenaline a background hum as he sank deeper into that primal space. His hand brushed against the wall as he stepped closer to the kitchen, the rough texture grounding him for a moment, keeping him focused, controlled.

He turned just in time to see it—the shadow of movement, too fast, too close. A figure lunged toward him from the kitchen, out of the wreckage, silent but deadly.

The scent of sweat hit him first—acrid, overpowering.

A split second. The world stilled.

Will’s body reacted before his mind could even catch up. Instinct flared, muscles coiling with lightning reflexes. He spun, narrowing the gap with a lightning strike, his stance shifting into something more feral. His limbs hummed with the raw, brutal strength he rarely allowed himself to acknowledge.

Time slowed. The air between them thickened, charged with the raw tension of imminent violence. Will's vision locked onto the figure—blurry at first but gaining clarity as it barreled toward him, fast and reckless, limbs a blur of motion. Will’s mind calculated—an angle, a weak point. The intruder was overcommitting, his balance too forward. It wasn’t conscious thought anymore. It was survival.

Will lunged forward, closing the gap between them with vicious speed, his breath hissing through clenched teeth as their bodies collided. Flesh hit flesh—hard, jarring. The sound was a dull thud, followed by the sharp sting of pain radiating through his arms. His teeth rattled from the force of it, a sharp jolt shooting up his forearm. His limbs absorbed the intruder’s momentum, muscles tensing against the impact. His arms came up, instinctive, shifting into

defense. He felt the strain in his muscles, taut and ready, the resistance in his joints as he twisted to push the attacker back.

The man was huge. Broad-shouldered, towering over Will with brute strength behind every movement. Every swing carried the weight of a battering ram. The air between them swirled with heat and the sharp smell of aggression. The force of the collision made Will's body jolt, but he didn't falter—his feet braced against the floor, sliding only slightly as he gripped the intruder's arm, his mind already racing. Elbow joint, weakness in the grip—twist, disarm, break. He tried to twist it away from his body, trying to turn the attack into something he could control. But the man was strong—stronger than Will anticipated. His fists were like sledgehammers, swinging with the reckless abandon of someone confident in overwhelming physical power.

Will ducked under a wild swing, the man's fist grazing his shoulder as it sailed past his head. The whoosh of displaced air brushed his ear, too close, too fast. The sharp sting of wind sliced against his cheek, too near for comfort. He could feel the air shift with the force of it, and then his world became tight, narrow, focused.

Another strike. Will's arm shot up, blocking the blow with the edge of his forearm, the impact rattling his bones. The shock reverberated up his arm, vibrating through muscle and tendon. His breath hitched, but he used the momentum, spinning, shoving the man back with a grunt of effort. For a moment, it worked—the figure stumbled, feet slipping on the hardwood, giving Will a fraction of a second to press the advantage.

He surged forward, fists flying, aiming for the soft parts of the man's body—the ribs, the throat—but the intruder moved too fast, twisting away from the blows with the ease of someone who had done this before. Will felt his knuckles graze fabric, skin—close, but not close enough. The fleeting sensation of heat and rough fabric taunted him as his fists found nothing but air. The man's fist came crashing down.

Bone met flesh with a wet thud. Will tasted blood—metallic, sharp on his tongue. Brutal.

They clashed again, grappling, their bodies locked in a violent dance, every punch, every shove more desperate, more feral than the last. The man's size was a constant force, every move Will made met with crushing resistance, every advantage he gained quickly lost to raw, unyielding strength. They stumbled into the wreckage of the living room, smashing into furniture, broken pieces of his sanctuary grinding beneath their feet. Wood splintered beneath them, the crack of breaking glass underfoot. The air was thick with the mingled scents of sweat, blood, and the sharp tang of adrenaline. Will's breath came in harsh, ragged gasps, his muscles burning as he fought to keep pace with the relentless onslaught.

And then—a mistake.

A shift, small but lethal. The man slipped past Will's guard with a fluid motion that caught him off-balance. Before Will could react, the man's fist crashed into his ribs, driving the air from his lungs in a violent burst. A sickening crack reverberated through his chest, the world blurring for a split second, pain flaring white-hot.

The world tilted, a sharp, searing pain radiating through his chest, but Will barely had time to register it before another blow followed, this time to his side, brutal and efficient. His ribs crunched under the force, his vision swimming as his knees gave way beneath him. His knees buckled, his body crumpling under the sheer weight of the strike.

Will gasped, his vision blurring, his thoughts scattered in the haze of pain. He staggered, his legs giving out beneath him as the man's next punch landed squarely against the side of his head. A dull crunch. Pain exploded behind his eyes—a blinding, white-hot burst that swallowed everything. Everything went distant, the sounds of the house—the fight, the breath, the pounding blood—fading into an indistinct hum.

Everything went black.

Will's body collapsed, heavy and limp, the ground rushing up to meet him in slow motion. His ears rang, distant and hollow. His mind tried to grasp at reality, but it slipped away like sand through his fingers. The pain was still there, somewhere in the background, but he couldn't reach it anymore, couldn't hold on to the sharp edges of his consciousness. The world slipped away, the light from the shattered lamps and overturned furniture dimming into darkness as his body hit the floor with a dull, final thud.

And then—nothing.

Chapter End Notes

runs and hides don't hate me!!!

please please please drop a comment if you enjoyed, even just a little bit, comments make my day and fuel the writing gremlin within!! <3

and if you *really* enjoyed, please consider dropping something in my tip jar! (caffeine fuels the writing gremlin even more than comments!!)

come hang out with me on tumblr (@graciereadshannigram)!! would love to hear from y'all :))

The Stench of Pigs

Chapter Notes

omg HI Y'ALL!!!! i am back at RA and could not be happier! kinktober was a blast, but it feels so so so good to be sinking back into this story <3

i did end up breaking this chapter into two, mostly because i've realized my sweet spot for editing is between 8-10k words, otherwise i just get incredibly overwhelmed. PLUS this was just such a natural place to break :) i am truly hoping to get back on the 1-2 week posting schedule, and next weekend's chapter is mostly complete, as well as the first half of the following chapter, so let's gooooo!!

(i also upped the chapter count once more so i can stick with shorter chapters, oh noooooo)

beta'd by my loves sleepygorltm, and EnmitiesSaddestGlare. any remaining mistakes are my own!

enjoy babes <3<3<3

xoxoxo,
Grace

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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And then—nothing.

Will blinked awake, disoriented at first, his eyelids heavy as though they'd been stitched shut. His head throbbed, a dull, oppressive pressure that made his thoughts like molasses. For a brief, fleeting moment, he let the confusion linger, sinking into the comfort of not knowing. It felt safer, easier, to hover in the murk of half-sleep.

But the air intruded, thick and foul, clinging with a rancid, sour odor that seeped into his lungs. He could almost taste it—like rot steeped into the walls. His throat tightened, his

stomach twisting as the recognition hit: it was the smell of pigs.

The world snapped back into focus, his brain coming online so rapidly it was like being thrust into blinding light; the world reeled in sickening jerks, as if the ground had tilted sharply beneath him before finally settling.

Not home. Not safe.

He jerked upright, clearing his throat, as memories flickered to life—disjointed, like a film strip jamming in the projector. The ambush. Rough hands on him, the struggle.

Hannibal.

The thought cut through the haze, sharp and urgent.

Where is he?

Will's mind churned, conjuring fractured scenarios that twisted and blurred before they could fully form, each one worse than the last. His breathing quickened, barely perceptible, and his hand twitched reflexively, as if reaching for something that wasn't there. The ache in his ribs, his battered knuckles—all of it faded to a dull hum beneath the agitation building in his chest.

Hannibal is lethal, a quiet, steady voice echoed in his mind, trying to force logic into the chaos. *The man is more predator than human. He can fight, evade, manipulate—he's always been able to take care of himself.* Even trapped, Hannibal's mind was a blade, honed and capable of cutting through any situation. The thought should have calmed him, but it didn't.

Then how did he get taken?

The question hit like ice water, slicing through the thin reassurance. Hannibal—outmaneuvered, captured, possibly even bested by someone else. Will couldn't shake the sickening thought that whatever had happened, it meant Hannibal was vulnerable in a way Will had never imagined. Had never *allowed* himself to imagine.

It was wrong—an aberration against the natural order, against the very thing that drew Will to him in the first place. He felt his own chest tighten, pulse pounding erratically as his thoughts spiraled. Panic flickered, unraveling his composure by fraying threads.

Was Hannibal even alive?

A brutal flash of Hannibal's face—bound, bruised, stripped of his unbreakable poise—seared into his mind. The image was so visceral, so dark and vivid, that it nearly drove the air from his lungs.

Focus, he commanded himself, gripping the thought like a lifeline. But his breath stuck, lodged somewhere between his throat and his chest, as though the panic refused to release him. He forced himself to begin where he could, grounding himself by taking inventory of his own battered body.

Skin slick with sweat from a sudden surge of adrenaline, Will took stock of his battered body. His muscles screamed in protest, a sharp ache pulsing through his ribs. His back was rigid and stiff, the chill having seeped into his bones. His hands, pressed flat, met a gritty, rough texture—each scrape of his palm leaving a faint sting, the kind of dull abrasion that only came from concrete.

Will inhaled, feeling the pull of bruised muscles with each breath. “Fuck,” he muttered, wincing as pain lanced through his side, settling into a dull, relentless throb. Slowly, he braced himself and gingerly lifted the hem of his shirt, peeling the fabric away with a tense breath. The sight beneath made his stomach turn—a mottled expanse of skin, dark with bruises that stretched from his ribs down to his hip. He pressed a tentative hand to the worst of it, his fingertips grazing over an ugly, purpling swell along his right side, where the skin felt stretched and unforgiving.

The swelling resisted the touch; the impact that caused it had settled deep, bruising not just the surface but deeper into the very muscle. He grimaced, letting the shirt drop back down, his hand hovering briefly over the sore spot as if reluctant to leave it unguarded. The pain spread out like a slow burn, fingers twitching at the memory of wood splintering, the crack as he’d been thrown against the shelves in his living room. The edges had dug into him, books scattering as his body absorbed the impact.

He gritted his teeth, forcing himself to focus, to complete his inventory. He reached up, tracing the swollen skin around his eye; it was puffy, bruised—definitely a black eye. He prodded lightly at his temple, testing for the ache that hinted at a mild concussion. The pain flared white hot and he let out a shaky breath, almost smirking at the self-inflicted jab. Will’s attention shifted to his knuckles, the skin scraped raw and bruised—a reminder of blows he barely remembered landing.

He moved down over his thighs, pressing along his legs through the fabric. Every spot he touched sparked a new ache, especially along his left thigh, where he felt a deep bruise spreading under his skin, the fabric tight against the swelling. His shins throbbed with the sting of scrapes, and his knee twinged when he bent it, sending a dull, pulsing pain up his leg.

His whole body felt like a patchwork of aches and bruises, but he knew he could work through it. He’d been hurt before. His body was a tool, battered but still holding—and that would have to be enough.

Rage began to rise up, slowly at first, then scorching bright as he let it take root, burning away the fear until it shrank back, beaten into submission. Anger was better—cleaner. The tightness in his chest didn’t loosen, but it transformed—no longer the asphyxiating weight of fear, but something taut and controlled. This heat had a purpose, a razor’s edge he could press against his fears and cut them down.

Let it burn, he thought, *burn through every last useless thought.*

His hands balled into fists, knuckles paling as his nails dug into his palms, sending needles of pain into his skin. He felt the tension grinding in his jaw, a solid pressure that steadied him, that channeled the fury clawing to the surface. This— *this* —he could use. He forced his

mind to slow, to sharpen, allowing the anger to settle around him like a familiar old coat, drawing his mind back into clarity.

The pigs.

The stench of them hit him again, thick and rancid, the stench of pigs suffusing the damp air around him. His stomach twisted, nausea mingling with anger. He knew this place. The realization fell over him in a wave of disgust, rank and inescapable: *Mason Verger.* Of course, *of course* it was him. No one else would drag him here, to this graveyard of rotting flesh, to a pit that reeked of death and cruelty. Only Mason had a taste so vile, a need so twisted, as to revel in another's misery, to turn a place into a mockery of life, where everything was putrid, contaminated, everything designed to make him suffer.

Will forced himself to take stock, the cold logic threading through the anger now, balancing it. His limbs ached, muscles stiff, but they moved easily enough. No dizziness, no nausea, no pounding headache—nothing to suggest he'd been drugged. His mind felt clear now, the fog lifting entirely. That was something. He hadn't been out long, then. Hours, maybe less.

He let his eyes sweep the room. Dim light filtered in from somewhere above, casting the barest of glows across the damp concrete. The walls were thick, unforgiving, holding in the stench of pigs and blood like a sick trophy. The window above was a sliver of night, stars barely visible through the grime. Still dark outside. His capture had happened recently—within hours. He ran the numbers in his head. *7:30 PM, maybe 8.*

Muskrat Farm wasn't far. Two hours. Maybe less.

Still time.

His fingers twitched, flexing as if they might claw their way out on instinct alone, his body pulling tighter, muscles drawn taut. There was still time. Maybe.

But not much.

He pushed himself up, palms pressing into the rough chill of the concrete. It bit back, leeching heat from his skin. The room around him was small, claustrophobic, its bare walls closing in like a fist. *Designed to keep someone like him contained.* Nothing to grab, nothing to twist or bend into a weapon—just cold, empty space. Will's body moved before his mind could form the thought, instincts humming, eyes darting over every inch of the place. He stalked along the perimeter, fingers brushing along the seams in the walls, every corner explored with meticulous care.

Nothing.

No cracks to exploit. No windows to pry open, no vents larger than his fist. The air was stale, thin, as if even oxygen was rationed in this prison. The door—a slab of steel, thick and unmoving—mocked him. It was bolted from the outside, its weight and solidity unmistakable. He could almost feel Mason's gaze, hear his slimy laugh vibrating through the walls. A trap, well-laid and tight.

That bastard.

The air pressed down on him like a heavy hand, each breath harder to pull in than the last. The room felt like it was alive with menace, conspiring to suffocate him under its weight. Every noise was amplified, a reminder of his entrapment. His senses sharpened, every nerve on edge, tuned to the smallest shifts—the faint creak of boards, the rasp of air moving through the vents.

He was running out of time. His heart kicked faster, frustration creeping in with every second that bled away. *Too fast.* His breath quickened, shallow and harsh in the still air, his mind and body circling, searching for an out. There had to be one. There always was.

As he paced around the room, so too was his mind circling Hannibal. Was he here too? Could he be in the next room, restrained, waiting for whatever Mason had planned? The thought sent a jolt through him—fear, anger, something that felt like desperation but tasted like resolve. He could imagine Mason's smug, twisted face, savoring the anticipation of their suffering, drawing it out.

Will couldn't help the flicker of anxiety that surged, rising like bile. His hands curled into fists at his sides. He needed to think, to plan. His survival instincts were humming beneath the surface, itching to take over, but his mind kept drifting—back to Hannibal. He hadn't seen him go down. He had to believe Hannibal was still alive.

He let out a slow breath, forcing himself to focus.

First, he needed a way out. The rest would come later.

Not too much later, the door opened with a slow creak, an excessive flourish that Mason Verger undoubtedly relished. The sound dragged through the room like a blade, carrying a sense of theater, as though he wanted it to fester in Will's mind before he crossed the threshold. But Will kept his back to it, listening as footsteps shuffled closer, the slick, oily presence of Mason Verger preceding him.

"Well, well," Mason's voice coiled into the room, smooth and dripping with satisfaction. "Look who's awake. I was starting to think you might miss all the fun."

Will's eyes lingered on the bare walls a moment longer, noting each crack and shadow as though they held more meaning than the man standing behind him. Deliberately refusing to give Mason the satisfaction of immediate attention, he finally turned, keeping his gaze steady, neutral, and settling on the man who now stood in the doorway with the casual arrogance of someone who believed he owned the world.

Mason Verger looked pristine—charmingly handsome, even—with his tailored suit and perfect hair, but the malice in his eyes undercut the appearance, sharp and venomous. He took a slow, self-satisfied breath, savoring the moment, and Will watched his gaze sweep across the room, as though every corner belonged to him. His smile stretched, but not too far. No, Mason's cruelty was the kind you couldn't see on the surface. It lingered underneath, curling just out of reach, like the promise of something terrible.

“I wouldn’t want to disappoint,” Will replied, his voice measured. He let the words settle, watching Mason’s smile grow just a fraction, as though he’d taken it as a small victory.

“Oh, you could never disappoint me, Will,” Mason continued, stepping into the room. “In fact, I’ve been looking forward to this little reunion. I do love a good conversation, don’t you?”

The cane in Mason’s hand tapped lightly against the floor as he moved closer, more an accessory than a necessity. His steps were unhurried, controlled, as though the world bent to accommodate his pace. Will’s eyes followed the man’s movements, taking in the slow circle Mason made, drawing some unseen line around Will.

Predator. Will nearly scoffed at the thought. Mason fancied himself a powerful hunter, the master of every encounter. But to Will, he was nothing more than a sadistic opportunist, mistaking cruelty for strength. Mason could never understand what made a predator a real threat. He had none of the cunning, none of the instinct that true predators possessed—least of all the ones he thought himself equal to.

“I have to thank my dear sister for this little arrangement,” Mason went on, his words slithering out, and he dragged out the last word, letting it hang thickly in the air between them, an accusation dressed in a thin veil of insinuation. “Margot always had such questionable taste in… friends.”

Oh, here we go, Will thought as Mason’s eyes narrowed, glinting with something unsavory. “I saw the two of you at the opera,” he sneered. “Quite the cozy little pair you made.” He paused. “Makes me wonder just how... cozy you two have gotten.”

Will’s jaw tensed as he held Mason’s gaze, biting back the urge to hurl some pointed, cutting remark about Mason’s own twisted fixation on his sister. The man’s hypocrisy was blinding. But he kept his mouth shut, refusing to give Mason the satisfaction of an outburst.

Mason’s smile widened, a glint of amusement in his eyes as he noticed the flicker of restraint in Will’s expression. “Oh, holding back, are we? How very... gentlemanly.” He tilted his head, the cane lifting an inch off the ground as he leaned forward, his eyes narrowing with glee. “You see, Margot and I have an understanding,” he whispered, his lips curling into a smirk. “I look out for her, protect her from people who might... take advantage of her.”

Will’s stare remained fixed, though a flash of revulsion flickered behind his calm. The sick irony in Mason’s words twisted his stomach, and he fought to keep his face a mask. Mason’s idea of “protection” was as toxic as his cruelty, and it twisted Will’s stomach to think of Margot’s position under her brother’s thumb. But he kept his silence, waiting.

Mason’s eyes narrowed with satisfaction, taking Will’s composure as reluctant acceptance. “I imagine you understand that kind of responsibility, Will,” Mason continued, his voice sickly sweet. “Family is important, isn’t it?”

Will’s lips twitched, his gaze sharpening just enough to hint at disdain. “Margot’s doing just fine without your version of ‘family,’ Mason,” he replied, each word edged with a faint

warning. “She’s better off making her own choices, without your brand of protection poisoning them.”

Mason’s smile didn’t falter, but a cold glint sparked behind his eyes, calculating. He leaned in, lowering his voice to a conspiratorial murmur, as though whispering a dark confidence. “Do you think she tells you everything, Will? Or does she like to keep some things hidden, just for herself? Secrets have a way of piling up, don’t they?” He let the words sink in, a smirk tugging at the corner of his mouth. “I’ll bet that eats at you.”

Will held Mason’s gaze, his voice steady but needling. “You’re not worried about Margot’s secrets, Mason—you’re worried she’s slipping out of your grasp.” He shrugged, his gaze dropping briefly to inspect his fingernails as if only mildly interested. “And you’re afraid it has something to do with me.”

For an instant, something flickered across Mason’s face—a crack in the smooth facade. His cane stilled, an almost invisible twitch in his expression betraying a momentary slip. But it was gone in a flash, masked by a laugh. “Afraid?” he chuckled. “Oh, Will, you misunderstand. I’m not afraid. I’m... curious.” He tapped his cane against the floor, a slow, rhythmic beat, letting the sound draw out the silence between them. “And I do so love to satisfy my curiosity.”

He let that hang in the air for a beat, watching Will with eyes that sparkled with something close to delight—twisted and dark, the way someone might watch an animal squirm under glass. Will stayed silent, eyes unreadable, the cold detachment of his gaze giving away nothing. But his patience was being tested. Mason was digging, prying at the edges of his calm, looking for a reaction to exploit.

“You know, Will, when my men came to collect you, they expected *you* , not Doctor Lecter,” Mason drawled, his tone light, almost amused. “But who am I to pass up an opportunity like that?” The words dangled in the air, bait on a hook, and Will felt something twist, a faint spark of anger warming his blood at the mention of Hannibal.

Will’s focus flicked inward for a fleeting moment, forcing him to consider his approach.

Mason was looking for weak spots, places where he could sink his hooks and drag up blood. They had already been seen together at the opera, clearly there as a couple—something Mason had twisted into a weapon the moment he got a clear look. If Mason saw even a glimmer of what Hannibal truly meant to him, he’d latch on to it like a starving dog to a bone, stripping it down to the marrow.

It was nauseating, hearing Mason circle their relationship like prey, dangling insinuations of betrayal and taunting him with words that felt as vile as the man himself. Will felt his jaw tighten, a flicker of instinctual protectiveness, a flame he smothered quickly; he couldn’t allow even the smallest hint of it to show. Mason thrived on signs of weakness, any hint of what mattered to his enemies. Will’s silence was its own kind of armor.

“Honestly, it’s probably for the best,” Mason mused, voice laced with feigned consideration. “Margot’s been far too pleased with herself ever since those little sessions with Doctor Lecter. All that therapy with him... she’s developed this annoying optimism.” Mason scoffed,

his lip curling. “If things had kept up that way, I’d have had to do something about him eventually.”

Will’s face remained neutral, but his eyes narrowed, a subtle shift that Mason seemed to notice and enjoy. Mason stepped in closer, close enough for Will to catch the sharp, cloying scent of his cologne, heavy and sickly sweet, layered on thick as if to mask something far more unpleasant beneath it. Will held his ground, resisting the urge to step back.

“But that Doctor Lecter didn’t make it easy for them,” Mason went on, a trace of obscene delight curling into his voice. “One of my men paid the price for that little... mix-up.” He clucked his tongue, feigning disappointment, his voice dripping with patronizing amusement. “Nasty work the good doctor made of him—made a bit of a mess, you know? Like a feral animal. Could have been more civilized about it, don’t you think?”

Will raised an eyebrow, allowing a faint smirk to tug at his lips. "And here I thought you'd appreciate a bit of feral," he replied, voice edged with dark humor, the words a low challenge. There was a gleam in his eye, a hint of dry amusement that suggested Hannibal's brutality was, at best, a forgone conclusion. "But what else would you expect from the alleged Chesapeake Ripper? It’s not exactly a title you get for... restraint."

Mason's face lit up with twisted delight, his eyes dancing with malice, as though Will had just handed him a long-awaited prize. "Ah, yes, the Ripper! And here you are, Will—still sticking to that story?" His voice dripped with mockery, savoring each word like a private joke he intended to hoard all to himself. He leaned in a little closer, voice softening to a sneer. "The FBI’s golden boy, slumming it with a monster. Tell me, do they even know what kind of company you keep?"

Mason was a little too close to the mark for Will’s comfort. The smirk wavered for an instant, but Will held steady, letting the hint of reaction pass before shifting to calculated calm.

It was the perfect game for him: poking at the dark places he could sense between Will and Hannibal, hunting for cracks that he could split open. Mason was trying to tighten the noose, winding his suspicions tighter with every goading remark. But he couldn’t give Mason even a glimpse of what lay beneath. He needed to think fast, to divert Mason and give him something to chew on that would leave him further from the truth, not closer. Best to twist it, dangle back the “confession” Mason wanted—just another job, another dangerous creature Jack had ordered him to capture.

Will’s smirk only widened, though his eyes remained cold, unblinking. “Jack Crawford knows plenty,” he replied, voice smooth as glass. “You think I’m getting close to Hannibal for *fun,* Mason? Jack put me in that seat across from him. He put me in Hannibal’s home, in his life, right where he wants me.” Each word came out calm, indifferent, rehearsed. His hand flexed lightly at his side, a subtle grounding gesture.

He was just a cog in the FBI’s wheel, a dutiful agent doing the job he’d been assigned. Will let a small, calculated pause linger, then added with a shrug, “All in the service of getting that confession he’s after. Who am I to question orders?”

Mason's look of amusement shifted, his smile turning speculative as he mulled over Will's words. A glint of something close to respect flickered in his eyes, and Will felt a flash of satisfaction as Mason's gaze sharpened, assessing him anew.

"Playing him for a confession?" Mason rolled the words around in his mouth, leaning in, the smile on his face widening as if he were savoring some wicked secret. "Maybe you're more like me than I thought," he murmured, the words a quiet hum. "More practical. More willing to dirty those FBI-issued hands." He chuckled, his eyes shining with malice.

Will's lips twitched into a faint smile, keeping his tone casual, though his eyes held Mason's. "It's called being thorough, Mason. Hannibal's still a suspect, and I'll do what's necessary to close the case. Whatever that means." Will kept his gaze steady, letting just enough steel creep into his voice to show Mason he meant business, even if it meant bending the rules. Mason could think Will was ruthless, capable of taking down anyone in his path—even Hannibal.

"Tell me, Will," Mason said, his voice a low purr. He moved to Will's side, watching him from the corner of his eye. "How does it feel, playing doctor with the doctor? Does the danger get your blood going?" His eyes narrowed, watching Will closely, probing for any reaction that might betray something deeper.

Will's face remained impassive, but his eyes glinted with a dark amusement. He shifted his weight slightly, one shoulder lifting in a shrug, leaning back just enough to give off a relaxed, almost casual air. "Righteous justice has its perks," he replied coolly, a hint of sarcasm threading his tone. "Hannibal trusts me, sees me as… sympathetic. And if playing along means I can bring him to justice? Then sure, I'll go along with it."

He let the implication hang, a glimmer of satisfaction flickering in his eyes as he watched Mason absorb his words. Let Mason think him cold, conniving, an agent without conscience or remorse. It was better than allowing him to see the truth—the fierce, protective instinct that drove him now, that made Hannibal's life non-negotiable.

Mason's smirk widened, clearly pleased by the idea of Will's double-dealing, drawn to the notion of Will as an operative willing to use anyone in his path.

"Playing the role, drawing him in…" Mason murmured, his voice almost reverent, as though he were savoring the idea. An obscene delight curled into his tone as he added, "And I'll bet my last dollar that your Doctor Lecter has no idea. Imagine his face when he realizes *you're* the one slipping the noose around his neck."

Will's gaze remained steady, a faint smile hovering on his lips. "Hannibal Lecter is a brilliant man, but he's also arrogant. *Blindly* arrogant." He let his voice drop, almost to a whisper. "He has no reason to suspect I'm anything other than… loyal."

Not a lie, Will thought sardonically.

Mason's smile grew sharper, predatory, as though Will had handed him a weapon he could use. "Loyal," he echoed with a sneer. "I can't think of anything more dangerous than loyalty

that's only skin-deep." He paused, eyes gleaming with malice. " *That* is something I can respect, Will."

For a moment, Mason's face twisted with glee at Will's thirst for vengeance. But the glint of suspicion didn't leave his eyes. He cocked his head, an edge of caution lacing his tone. "And you think the doctor's going to sit nicely on a platter and let you have him?"

Will's smile faded just enough to convey a flicker of danger, his gaze darkening as he leaned in, voice dropping to a low, icy register. "Oh, he'll sit there for me, Mason. He won't see it coming—not until the very end." His lips twitched with barely concealed menace. "But if *you* lay a finger on him, if you mess with my plans… well, you'll find that taking away my justice will cost you more than you're ready to pay."

"Oh, don't worry that pretty head of yours—he's alive." Mason let out an exaggerated sigh, rolling his eyes as though Will were a child throwing a tantrum. His eyes sparkled with amusement and perhaps a hint of apprehension as he studied Will's reaction.

A thrill sparked in Will's chest, sharp and fierce, as though Hannibal's defiance had sent a jolt directly into his bloodstream. The man was cornered, but he was still fighting. And he was still alive. Relief washed over Will, so quick and visceral he had to steady himself before Mason could catch the slip.

Mason's smile stretched just a fraction wider, and he began to pace like a predator enjoying the luxury of toying with its prey. "Well, Will," he began again, his voice slipping into a more languid cadence, each word dripping like syrup from his tongue. He took his time, savoring the moment, letting Will sit in the thick, oppressive quiet.

"You've always struck me as a man who likes to be... prepared." Mason's gaze slid up and down, assessing Will with a glint of curiosity. "One of those people who needs to know the details, am I right? Guess that's why you and Doctor Lecter got so cozy. Two peas in a pod, really. But I think you'll appreciate the art of anticipation. The build-up. That's where the real fun begins."

Will's jaw clenched. It was the only outward sign of the surge of adrenaline flooding his system. Mason's mention of Hannibal had triggered something deep within him—something primal. But he forced himself to remain blank, denying Mason the satisfaction of seeing anything more.

Mason tilted his head, catching the shift as if savoring it. "Oh, don't be so tense. Life's so fragile, you know? One wrong move and—" He snapped his fingers, the sound echoing in the room. "Gone. Just like that."

Will's eyes flickered, but his silence persisted. His mind worked rapidly, assessing, calculating. He had no doubt Hannibal was close, likely within the same building, but Mason wasn't playing this game for simple amusement. There was something more, something planned, waiting for the right moment. The whole thing stank of premeditation.

"Of course," Mason continued, his tone deceptively light, each word lingering as though savoring a private joke, "I didn't want to start the festivities without you. That wouldn't be

fair, would it? After all, you and Doctor Lecter have been through so much together." He paused, considering Will with a glint of newfound curiosity. "A bond like that deserves a proper send-off, wouldn't you say?"

Will caught the shift, noting how Mason's smile tightened, his expression gleeful but contemplative, as though a new idea had taken root.

"You know," Mason went on, letting the words drip with dark amusement, "I had a plan for this evening. A good one, too. But you've given me… well, let's say you've given me some things to consider." His eyes brimmed with a perverse excitement as he leaned closer. "And if you're telling the truth, Will, if this is all some grand game to catch him, then I think you're going to enjoy tonight more than I anticipated."

Will's stomach twisted, a sickening churn that he buried deep beneath his steady exterior. He knew Mason was baiting him, dangling Hannibal's life in front of him like some grotesque reward for good behavior. But Will wasn't about to give him the reaction he wanted. Instead, he held Mason's gaze, his posture deceptively relaxed, though every fiber of him remained braced, ready.

Mason stopped pacing, stepping in close enough for Will to feel the heat of his breath, his expression alight with sadistic glee. "But don't go getting too excited. The show hasn't even started yet. Oh no." His voice dropped to a conspiratorial whisper. "We wouldn't want you to miss the main event, now would we? I want you both awake for this. Every. Last. Moment."

He pulled back, his smirk widening as he took in Will's impassive face. The smug gleam in Mason's eyes practically dared Will to break, to show even a hint of fear. "Let's just say, Will, that I have a few ideas of my own, and I can't wait for you to find out exactly how this night is going to end."

He straightened up, his tone turning mockingly pleasant. "Anyway, I'll leave you to your thoughts. Rest up. We've got a big night ahead, and I want you to be in top form for the grand finale."

With a final smug glance, Mason turned on his heel, the tap-tap of his cane the only sound in the room as he made his way to the door. The slow rhythm echoed in the stillness, each step a reminder of his control over the space. "Enjoy your solitude while you still can, Will. It won't be long now."

The door clicked shut behind him with a heavy, resonant thud, the metallic scrape of the lock sliding into place reverberating through the oppressive silence that followed. Will let out a slow exhale, feeling the simmering anger and determination steady within him, a tightly coiled force just waiting for release. Mason had shown his hand just enough. Hannibal was alive—for now—and time was running out.

Will exhaled slowly, centering himself, the fury settling into something colder, sharper. This wasn't over. Not by a long shot. He was going to get out of here. He was going to find Hannibal. And when this was done, Mason Verger's little performance would be his last. The image of Mason's smug, leering face lingered in his mind for a moment, but Will saw past it, already envisioning the precise, inevitable collapse of Mason's plan.

His breath steadied, each exhale sharpening his focus, hardening the edge of his resolve. When he got out of here, Mason wouldn't see it coming—none of them would.

The door had barely clicked shut behind Mason when Will's mind started to spin. He sat in the stillness, staring at the spot where Mason had stood, but the quiet didn't last long. It never did. His thoughts churned—too fast, too loud to ignore.

Mason's plan was already in motion, that much was clear. The silence itself felt heavy, weighted with the ticking that had yet to start, as if Mason had planted it here just to taunt him. The bastard had wanted him to feel it, to stew in the knowledge of what was coming. But Will couldn't wait. He couldn't afford to. There was no time for that kind of indulgence, not now. Not when Hannibal needed him.

Wherever Hannibal was—bound and waiting, just like him—he needed Will. A surge hit his chest, wild and uneven, and he paced to bleed off the energy, letting his fingers brush the cold, damp walls to soothe himself. Hannibal, for all his elegance, for all his power, was trapped. It was Will's turn to break him free. The roles had reversed, hadn't they? He let that thought settle, its weight both heavy and liberating. He'd let Mason think he was in control. He'd let himself be led, tied up, maneuvered like a pawn in Mason's twisted game.

But that was the trick, wasn't it? The bait.

Will Graham was no longer prey.

The dim light caught on his reflection in the narrow, dirty window—sharp eyes, a gaunt face, his body taut with a coiled energy that hadn't existed in him before Hannibal. His senses were in overdrive—every shadow, every sound magnified as his instincts clawed their way to the surface. He inhaled, the scent of mold and rot seeping into his lungs, merging with the sharp tang of blood in his memory, as he imagined Hannibal nearby, somewhere close enough to smell the same foul air.

He wanted to taste the blood, to feel the crack of bone under his hands, to let the violence consume him fully. That was the truth of it, wasn't it? He didn't just want to live; he wanted to revel in it. The brutality. The fight. The *power* .

Mason had made one fatal mistake: he'd underestimated how much Will had changed. How deeply he had *become* . The smirk that spread across his lips came unbidden, a flash of savage satisfaction as he studied his reflection—an unrecognizable man on the edge of something monstrous. Something beautiful.

Hannibal had always known this was inside him. Had coaxed it out, gently at first, and then more brutally, until Will couldn't deny it any longer. He wasn't the man he used to be. He wasn't weak. He wasn't just a tool for the FBI to use or a victim of circumstances anymore. No. He flexed his fingers, feeling the pulse of his own heartbeat drumming through them, steady and ready.

Will had Become, and now he would *show* them.

When the door next creaked open, it was a faint sound against the oppressive silence of the room. Will's muscles tensed immediately, his eyes snapping toward the noise, fingers curling into fists. But then—he stilled, his breath catching. It wasn't Mason, or some faceless henchman.

It was Margot.

She stood frozen in the doorway, a pale ghost against the dim light, her eyes wide with barely-contained terror. Gone was the elegant, composed woman Will had seen at the opera, the one who'd moved with poise, draped in rich fabric and subtle confidence. Now, her face was a map of violence, a dark, ugly blotch blooming across her cheekbone, the skin swollen and mottled in sick shades of purple and yellow. The heavy bruise drew Will's gaze like a wound he couldn't tear his eyes from, and he could feel the sharp pang of his own knuckles aching to strike back.

Her hair, usually slicked back in clean waves, clung to her face in damp, uneven strands—whether from sweat, tears, or blood, Will couldn't tell. She was walking with a limp, each step tentative, her weight shifting unevenly as if even standing brought pain.

Will exhaled, slow and controlled, his gaze locked on her movements, watching through narrowed eyes as she stepped further into the room.

She moved like a wounded animal, her steps jerky, uncertain, each one cautious as if she expected another blow at any moment. Will's chest tightened as he took her in; even her breathing was shallow, catching like it pained her, a tremor threading through each breath that betrayed how close she was to breaking. Every few seconds, her head snapped to the side, her eyes darting back toward the open door as if Mason's twisted silhouette might appear in the threshold. Will's fingers curled into fists, nails biting into his palms.

Rage stirred anew deep in his gut, an ugly, roiling disgust rising with it. This was what Mason had done to her—broken her, hollowed out her spirit and left her trembling like prey.

Margot stepped closer, her voice barely more than a whisper, thin and ragged as if even speaking hurt.

"I don't have long," she rasped, her voice wavering despite the fire in her eyes. "He'll notice if I'm gone too long."

Will straightened, stepping forward, his mind racing. "Margot—"

"Don't," she cut him off sharply, her tone fierce despite the fear etched in her face. She took another step closer, her eyes locking onto his, blazing with urgency. As he watched her, her fingers began to drum rapidly against her thigh, each tap an uneven beat that betrayed the tension she held just below the surface, a rhythm as frantic as her darting gaze.

"Listen to me." Her fingers briefly stopped their tapping. "I'm leaving the door open for you. I'll... I'll give you time, but you have to count. To 500." Her fingers resumed their relentless movement, drumming faster now, as if keeping pace with the wild beat of her heart. "It'll give me enough distance."

Will opened his mouth to ask more, to press for details, but Margot's gaze hardened, silencing him before he could get the words out. The panic in her voice sharpened into something resolute, something stronger than fear.

"When you're done counting, do whatever you need to do." Her lips tightened, a flicker of something grim and bitter passing across her face—some dark understanding between them. Will nodded, feeling the energy shift between them, an acknowledgment of what needed to be done. What *he* would do.

Margot's eyes flickered toward the door, her shoulders stiffening as if Mason's shadow might leap out at her from the hall at any moment. She swallowed, her voice barely above a rasp. "He's in the slaughterhouse, attached to the stables," she whispered, her words coming quickly now, like she was afraid to linger on them too long. Her hand lifted in a shaky gesture toward the far end of the property.

"The hall from here opens into a courtyard, just beyond the slaughterhouse. You'll pass the old shed, then the livestock pens, and from there you'll see the barn. There's a small gate leading from the yard, but…" Her voice hitched, her gaze flickering nervously as though even describing the path could invoke some lurking threat. "It's never that simple. You'll need to move through the back passage—there's a storage area with barrels, crates... it's tight, but it's your best shot at staying out of sight."

Will's eyes narrowed, absorbing the path she was laying out, each turn becoming a vivid mental map he could almost feel beneath his feet. The hall, winding its way past the shed where the old tools and forgotten equipment festered. Past the livestock pens, thick with the stench of animals and rot. Then the slaughterhouse, its reek already clinging to the back of his throat. Tight corners, narrow gaps, and places where the walls seemed to press in on you. The barn's hulking silhouette rose in his mind, still and quiet, the shadows heavy and unsuspicious—a perfect place for Mason to feel secure in his control.

Margot's gaze darted toward the door again, her lips pressing into a thin line. "There are guards everywhere," she whispered, her voice dropping to a near tremble. "Armed. They rotate every hour. You'll see them by the fences, patrolling in pairs, always watching the gates. And in the courtyard…" Her voice faded, fear wrapping her words as if she could already hear the guards' heavy boots scuffing the earth, marking each step they took in the dark. "They watch the pens too, sometimes near the old machinery. Anywhere someone might slip through."

Will's lips twitched, though he kept it hidden from her. Guards in every corner, eyes on the perimeter, thinking they controlled the maze. But they were wrong. Will could already picture how this would play out—each turn an opportunity, each corner a place to strike. In the shadows by the shed, he imagined the first guard falling, a clean line of blood across his throat. The ones by the fences wouldn't even have time to shout before their blood soaked the dirt. Mason had surrounded himself with men who thought they were the hunters, but they were nothing more than prey in Will's eyes.

She trailed off, visibly shaking now.

Will didn't respond to the caution. He didn't need to. A fierce resolve settled over him, each nerve winding tighter, ready to strike the moment he stepped into the hall. Each guard he came across was simply another step on the path, another piece of Mason's twisted game that Will would tear apart, piece by bloody piece. The guards didn't know they were already dead men walking.

Margot took a step back, her breath shuddering as if the weight of what she was saying was too much to bear. Her eyes darted around the room, never settling, her terror simmering just below the surface. "The gate sticks," she added, voice low, as if Mason might hear her from wherever he lurked. "You'll need to shove it hard to get it open."

Will nodded, catching the slight shake in her jaw, the faint quiver as she braced herself. She looked to the open door, eyes narrowed as if willing herself to walk through it—to walk back into Mason's orbit. He saw the fear etched in her face, the burden of what she was about to set loose, and the desperation she tried so hard to hide. This wasn't just a way out. It was a weapon she was placing in his hands, the only chance she had to claw out of the nightmare her life had become.

"500," she whispered again, the number a lifeline in the storm. Her lips pressed together, and her gaze lingered on Will for just a moment longer, a flicker of shared understanding passing between them—both of them trapped in different ways, both of them ready to rip free. She took another step back, her movements stiff, as if each one carried the weight of a decision she could never undo.

Then, without another word, she turned and slipped into the shadows beyond the door, leaving Will alone with the plan that was already taking shape in his mind.

The heavy silence closed in around him as the door creaked shut, sealing her escape route in his mind. Will stood motionless, every sense alive, his breath coming slow and measured, his pulse pounding with a deadly calm. The path was clear, the roles were set. Each step would be calculated, each turn committed to memory.

And at the end, Hannibal. Waiting.

Will stood still, his breath steady, his eyes locked on the space where Margot had disappeared. He needed to count. He closed his eyes, the faintest curl of a smirk ghosting his lips as he whispered under his breath, "One."

Every second brought him closer. Two. His hands flexed at his sides, fingertips brushing against the rough fabric of his pants, centering him as his mind began to shift. Three. The first tendrils of heat stirred in his chest, rage curling within his chest, fortifying his ribs, hot and patient. Four.

The numbers began to blur together, each one slipping through his teeth like a measured breath. Will felt the anger seeping into his bones, sinking deeper, the weight of it settling over him like a thick, dark blanket. Ten. Eleven. Twelve. His body felt warmer now, as if the rage had an internal pulse of its own, syncing with his heartbeat. He wasn't just angry anymore—he was becoming.

By the time he reached twenty, his muscles had begun to loosen. The coiled tightness in his limbs had transformed into readiness, the kind of readiness that a predator feels before the hunt. Thirty. Thirty-one. Thirty-two. His breath slowed, each inhale and exhale deeper as the world around him began to fade into a background hum. All he could hear now was the steady rhythm of his own voice counting, and the beating of his own heart.

With each number, the anger settled further, no longer frantic but cold, methodical. Fifty. It wasn't the wild, burning rage that had once consumed him. This was different. This was clean, sharpened by purpose, honed to a fine edge by the need to hunt. Sixty. His lips twitched into a smirk again, the beast inside him awakening, stretching as it slowly took hold.

By one hundred, Will's eyes had opened, and he found himself staring at the dim light seeping through the cracks of the door. His senses were sharpening now, his vision keener, his awareness expanding to every tiny sound, every subtle shift in the air around him. The room, the stench of pigs, the faint creaks of the building—it all faded into a muted hum in the back of his mind. There was only him, and the slow, delicious burn of anticipation curling through his veins. One hundred fifty.

His voice grew quieter as he counted. Two hundred. His hands flexed again, this time in anticipation of the violence he knew was coming. The guards, the obstacles in his path—they were nothing more than prey. Two hundred fifty. They didn't know it yet, but they were already dead. Each of them would fall, silently, efficiently.

And Will would savor it.

The numbers slowed even further as Will reached three hundred, his voice barely more than a breath now. The predator inside him shook itself into full awareness, pacing just beneath the surface, hungry. He was no longer fighting to control it. He was letting it guide him. Three hundred fifty. His breath hitched, the excitement barely restrained as the seconds ticked by.

By four hundred, the plan was crystal clear in his mind. Every step, every kill, laid out like pieces on a chessboard. His body felt like a finely-tuned instrument, the rage no longer a fire but a blade, sharp and cold, ready to cut through anything in its path. Four hundred fifty. He was ready.

Four hundred ninety-nine.

"Five hundred."

The last number escaped his lips like a quiet vow, a taste of iron on his tongue, and Will exhaled softly. This wasn't just a hunt anymore—it was a reclamation, a ritual of blood and purpose. Each step was measured, silent, drawing him deeper into the shadows where darkness didn't just obscure him—it cloaked him, absorbed him. Muskrat Farm belonged to him now, each corridor and inch of the maze bending to his purpose, guiding him straight to his quarry.

Ahead, he spotted two guards with their backs turned, guns hanging loose at their sides. They were bored, tired, blissfully unaware of what hunted them from behind. A twisted satisfaction stirred in his chest. He could already feel the outcome of this night, see its end etched in his

mind. His lips curled in a fleeting, humorless smile. This was Mason's security team? These two looked like they'd come straight from a mall parking lot.

Will cut forward, silent as water, his body a seamless line of motion blending into shadow. The first guard didn't even flinch before Will's arm cleaved the air. His elbow met the man's throat with ruthless precision, the cartilage snapping in a wet, satisfying crunch. The man's eyes bulged, his mouth opening in a silent struggle for breath before he slumped to the ground like a discarded sack of meat.

The second guard turned, catching a glimpse of Will's cold eyes just as his foot connected with the man's wrist, sending the gun skittering into the dark. Will's fist shot forward, smashing into his face with brutal precision, bone and skin yielding under his knuckles in a spray of warm blood. The man's head snapped back, shock frozen on his face. Will's knee met the guard's ribs, the satisfying crack forcing the air from his lungs in a strangled gasp.

Will straightened, inhaling the metallic tang of blood, letting it fill him with a grim, quiet clarity. Obstacles, he thought, looking down at the limp bodies littering his path. Hollow, discarded husks, offering barely a second's satisfaction. Each one of them erased another inch of distance between him and Hannibal, marking the path to the reunion they both craved. It was a dark promise fulfilled with every kill, his Becoming etched in blood. He kept moving, his body on autopilot, each kill sharpening the hunger for what lay ahead.

Around another corner, a third guard stumbled through his rounds, humming tunelessly, his gait heavy and distracted. A dark thrill rippled through Will's veins, a quiet joy at the ease with which he moved through Mason's guards—at the way they fell to him like brittle, breakable things. This was the best Mason could afford? Lazy rent-a-guards with loose guns and looser minds? The man had no idea the end was already on him, and his clueless whistling grated against Will's nerves. That sound would stop soon enough.

Knife in hand, Will closed the distance, his grip solid and unyielding. The guard shifted his weight, shoulders slouched, each step a silent confession of how far out of his depth he was.

With one tug, Will seized the guard by the collar, yanking him back. The man barely had time to gasp before the cold edge of Will's knife pressed into his throat. He felt the tremor run through the man's body, terror pulsing under his grip like a rabbit's heartbeat.

"Shh…" he whispered, close to the guard's ear, his voice low and mocking. It wasn't a comfort—it was a final sentence, the last sound this man would hear before his world went dark.

With a single stroke, he slit the man's throat, feeling the blood spill over his hand in thick, hot waves, painting the floor at his feet. He watched, impassive, as the man's body sagged in his hold, then flicked his wrist, discarding him like the useless threat he'd been.

He wiped his blade on the man's shirt with a slow, almost reverent motion, each stain of blood a dark consecration, his steps soft as he slipped through the gate, barely a whisper on the cool night air. The stench of livestock filled the courtyard, a rank blend of manure mingling with the fresh scent of blood that now clung to his skin.

Two more guards waited near a stack of feed barrels, muttering to each other, guns slung carelessly over their shoulders. Their minds were elsewhere—on cigarettes, paychecks, some cheap distraction. They might as well have handed him an invitation. Their obliviousness felt almost sacrilegious against the stillness of the night, each careless breath an insult to the purpose that pulsed through him. They were prey, too stupid to realize they'd wandered into the mouth of a predator.

With swift, silent steps, he closed the gap, every sense coming alive. His knife found the first guard's throat in one smooth motion, slicing a clean line through flesh and cartilage. The man's eyes bulged, a flash of realization just before his mouth fell open in a horrified, silent scream.

The second guard whirled, his face twisting from confusion to terror as Will's knife plunged into his gut. Blood soaked Will's hand, warm and viscous, as he twisted the blade with precise, ruthless force. The man let out a strangled gasp, his body shuddering as he hit the ground, nothing more than dead weight.

Will took a step back, his gaze sweeping over the bodies with detached satisfaction. The night air stung his skin, blood and sweat cooling over his knuckles. These men were nothing—disposable, faceless bodies along his path, mere vessels meant to be discarded. Only one thing mattered now, something far beyond them, pulling him closer with every lifeless stare left behind.

Hannibal. The one truth in the quiet destruction, the singular purpose that had pulled Will here like the moon dragging the tide. He slipped past the last few hallways Margot had mapped out, his senses narrowing to a point, drawn by the magnetic pull that hummed through his veins like a drumbeat. The dark mouth of the slaughterhouse loomed ahead, vast and waiting. Somewhere inside, Hannibal was there. Waiting. The certainty of it was more real than anything he'd ever known.

At the final gate Margot had marked, he shoved the rusted latch open, the metal scraping in reluctant protest. Every step, every drop of blood, had led him here. This was no longer a hunt. This was an affirmation—he would take Hannibal back, rip him from whatever depths this place had tried to bury him in.

Ahead, a final guard stood, rigid and alert. The man turned, catching Will's grin just a beat too late.

Will closed the distance in a vicious, unbroken motion, his hand locking around the guard's arm and wrenching it upward until bones cracked with a sickening snap. The guard's scream barely passed his lips before Will's forearm pressed into his throat, cutting off the air with merciless precision. The man's eyes met Will's, wide and pleading, but he found no mercy there—only a predator's unfeeling mask.

As the guard's body slumped at his feet, Will's pulse steadied, an exhale of satisfaction filling his lungs. Every step along this path had been a sacrament, a reminder that he was Becoming, his own dark promise fulfilled. He was nothing now but pure, ruthless intent. Every obstacle was a body, every step a grim affirmation of his power.

With one last look at the twisted path behind him, he pressed forward, his eyes dark and resolute as the slaughterhouse loomed before him, shadows clinging to its edges like a second skin. Hannibal was there, waiting, just beyond the carnage Will had cut through to reach him. A thrill spiraled through his chest—fierce, undeniable, alive.

Wherever you are, Hannibal—I'm coming.

Chapter End Notes

i hope this chapter was worth the wait for y'all!! please let me know in the comments what you think (kudos are also very much welcome <3)!!

as always, feel free to come hang out with me on tumblr (@graciereadshannigram)!! would love to hear from y'all :))

Works inspired by this one

Even Steven by wordwhore

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!